



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



WEDNESDAY — 27 OCT 2021

	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	10/27 Olympics in view: China Covid outbreak 10/27 Gulf Arab states still tout oil 10/27 US, China, Russia join Asia summit 10/27 US, China sparring over Taiwan heats up 10/26 Covid cases, deaths rise again in Europe 10/26 Mexico govt. resists vaccinating children 10/26 Vietnam vaccinates kids to reopen schools 10/26 China locks down city of 4M; small outbreak 10/26 Govt. crackdown intensifies in Cuba 10/26 Migrant caravan pushes thru Mexico 10/26 Canada PM promises activist government 10/26 Sudan PM was held at coup general's home 10/26 Haiti difficult relationship: gangs, business 10/26 Haiti police outgunned by gangs, underpaid	10/27 Airlines brace for onslaught of travelers 10/26 Covid cases falling in every region 10/26 Louisiana lifts indoor mask mandate 10/26 Enforcement vaccine mandates uneven 10/26 Back to school: guns, fights, acting out 10/26 CDC: immunocompromised 4th Covid shot 10/26 United: unvaccinated workers cost millions 10/26 Nor'easter batters NYC, Northeast 10/26 Whiplash: historic drought, now downpour 10/26 New US Fire Administrator 10/26 Officials: threats after 2020 elections 10/26 Women in state policing remains low 10/26 NTSB report Amtrak Montana derailment 10/26 Immigration arrests lowest level in decade 10/26 Thanksgiving feast to wallop the wallet 10/26 Bond market measure: inflation will last 10/26 Return to office meets supply chain snarls 10/26 Ports backlog: stubborn supply chain woes 10/26 Cargo shipwreck removal off Georgia coast	10/26 Seattle reopens some Covid vaccine clinics 10/26 Pierce Co. sheriff violated dept. standards 10/26 Homeless authority Seattle vision: \$27M 10/26 Seattle hot housing market cooling down 10/26 Tacoma clears encampment: now what? 10/25 Oregon: record number job vacancies
Cyber Awareness Go to articles	10/27 Bitcoin price slips 7% to \$58,400 10/26 SquirrelWaffle leverages malspam 10/26 NKorea turns to supply chain attacks 10/26 DDoS attack campaign against Voipfone 10/26 Canada govt. email leak exposes Afghans 10/26 Iranian gas stations knocked out of service	10/27 Anonymity no more? Age checks on web 10/26 US bans China Telecom: security concerns 10/26 Attackers hijack Craigslist emails: malware 10/26 DOJ: darknet drug bust nabs 150 suspects 10/26 Brutal WordPress plugin bug: wipe sites 10/26 Emailing waves unsolicited QR codes 10/26 FBI alert: Ranzky Locker ransomware 10/26 State Dept. to form cyber bureau 10/26 Conti changing business model 10/26 Interview with LockBit	10/26 Online portal to prove vaccination faulty
Terror Conditions Go to articles	10/27 China: Taliban eager for dialogue 10/27 Terrorism networks in German army 10/27 Turkey extends Syria, Iraq missions 2yrs 10/27 Gunmen kill 7 Pakistan police near border 10/26 Iraq officials: 11 villagers killed in IS attack 10/26 Iran wanted US out of Afghanistan	10/26 Pentagon: 439 Americans in Afghanistan 10/26 IS Afghanistan capable striking US in 6mo. 10/26 Iran's role in attack signals new escalation 10/26 Social media breeding ground extremism	
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	10/26 UN: window for climate action 'closing'	10/27 Tainted Halloween candy myth? 10/26 Joined anti-govt. militia using govt. emails 10/26 China controls thoughts beyond its borders	10/26 AG lawsuit: chicken 'sweeping conspiracy'
Crime, Criminals Go to articles	10/27 US seeks extradition WikiLeaks' Assange 10/27 Mexico vacation spots: cartel battlefields 10/26 'El Chapo' of Guatemala is a woman 10/26 Women rising to power in Sinaloa Cartel	10/27 Rising murder rate: cities pay shooters 10/27 Rittenhouse trial: 'rioters' not 'victims' 10/26 Illinois police officer shot, killed 10/26 Civil unrest: assaults on police rise 10/26 Disgruntled neighbor killed 9; life term jail 10/26 Police: surveillance mistake Laundrie case 10/26 Handguns account for most gun murders 10/26 Brinks getaway driver granted clemency 10/26 Dangerous laser strikes continue to rise	10/26 Armed juveniles abduct teen in Auburn 10/26 Seattle man pleads guilty Jan 6 assault 10/26 Arrest: Islamic Center of Tacoma arson 10/26 Mall shooting suspect known to police 10/26 Boise mall shooting probe; suspect dies

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Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Airlines brace: onslaught of travelers
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/airlines-brace-for-e2-80-98onslaught-e2-80-99-of-travelers-as-us-prepares-to-open-its-borders/ar-AAQ0q4f

As the United States prepares to reopen its borders to vaccinated travelers from countries that had previously been subjected to a travel ban, airlines are bracing for an “onslaught of travel all at once,” Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian said Tuesday.

Starting Nov. 8, people from 33 countries that had been barred from entering the United States because of the pandemic will be able to enter if they are fully vaccinated and show proof of negative coronavirus test results. U.S. citizens and permanent residents have been able to enter the United States, but most others were shut out.

[Travel ban will end Nov. 8 for international visitors who show proof of vaccination, negative coronavirus test](#)

Airlines will be responsible for verifying travelers’ vaccination statuses. The requirements, [according](#) to the White House, include: matching the name and birth date of the traveler to the vaccination record; confirming the record was issued by an “official source” in the country where the vaccine was administered; and ensuring that the traveler has had enough doses and that enough time has elapsed such that the person can be considered fully vaccinated.

The list of extra tasks for the airlines is sure to be a burden — but perhaps a welcome one, as airlines have lost out on revenue from tourists and other travelers who have thus far in the pandemic been unable to come to the United States.

The sudden rush of incoming passengers is “going to be a bit sloppy at first,” Bastian said at a travel [conference](#) hosted by the U.S. Travel Association. “There will be lines, unfortunately,” he said.

The U.S. Travel Association, a trade group representing companies in the travel industry, including Delta, welcomed the Biden administration’s plan to allow more travelers into the United States, saying guidance the White House issued Monday “provides much-needed clarity” for companies in the travel industry to plan for the deluge of travelers.

Bastian added that to keep up the demand for travel, airlines will need to make it easy for travelers to determine what the requirements and restrictions are. He said that Delta had developed an app to help travelers navigate the slew of rules.

The new regulations for incoming travelers also affect U.S. citizens entering the country. Unvaccinated U.S. citizens, permanent residents or the “small number of excepted unvaccinated foreign nationals” will, as of Nov. 8, need to be tested within one day of departure. Currently, the United States requires a negative coronavirus test taken within three days of departure. The three-day window will remain in place for vaccinated Americans.

Children under 18 will be exempt from the vaccination requirement, as some countries have yet to allow children to get coronavirus vaccinations. Children ages 2 to 17 will need to show a negative test result for entry — within three days of departure if traveling with a fully vaccinated adult and within one day if traveling alone or with an unvaccinated adult.

The United States will accept people who have been vaccinated with the shots that have been authorized within its borders — vaccines by Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech and Johnson & Johnson — as well as vaccines approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization, such as those developed by AstraZeneca with Oxford University, as well as by China’s Sinovac. It will also allow people who have received [combinations of such shots](#).

However, [Russia’s Sputnik V vaccine won’t be included](#), as it has yet to be approved by the WHO, which suspended its review of the vaccine over concerns about production practices.

Industry advocates had been pushing the Biden administration for months to lift restrictions, arguing that the United States was lagging behind other countries that had reopened their borders. Although much of Europe was opened to Americans, most Europeans have been unable to travel to the United States.

	U.S. travel has rebounded almost to pre-pandemic levels. On Monday, nearly 2 million people passed through security checkpoints operated at U.S. airports, according to data from the Transportation Security Administration. That's more than double the number of travelers recorded a year prior and about 300,000 less than the same day in 2019.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Seattle reopens some Covid vaccine clinics
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/vaccine/seattle-washington-covid-19-vaccine-sites-reopening-boosters-kids/281-2e657457-01a5-45dd-ab91-b27e27b0be81
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — As the U.S. moves a step closer to expanding COVID-19 vaccinations for millions more children between 5 and 11 years old, the City of Seattle is preparing for a surge in demand for the shots.</p> <p>Starting Friday, Oct. 29, a COVID-19 vaccine clinic at the Neighborhood House located at 6400 Sylvan Way SW in West Seattle will open. The site will be open Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.</p> <p>The clinic is making the final preparations to accommodate children to be vaccinated. The clinic will also provide extra capacity for adults seeking their booster shots, or for anyone who has yet to be vaccinated.</p> <p>"This is a really important day for us to set up these vaccination sites to be close to communities and make it easy for people. They can register online or they can just walk in," Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan said Tuesday.</p> <p>Seattle plans to reopen vaccine clinics around the city as demand is expected to increase. Last weekend, the clinic at the Amazon Meeting Center in South Lake Union reopened. The Rainier Beach site is expected to reopen next month.</p> <p>"We're watching the numbers fairly carefully, to see where are we lacking and not just in the first and second doses, but the third dose, and working with public health and the Department of Health. We think that the health care base of vaccination is working, but the health care gaps are in those communities," Durkan said.</p> <p>The Neighborhood House clinic in West Seattle is capable of offering 800 shots a day to start and it's expected to expand. People can walk-up, but reservations are recommended.</p> <p>Learn more about where to access vaccines in Seattle here.</p> <p>On Tuesday, a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advisory panel voted unanimously, with one abstention, that the benefits of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine in preventing the virus in 5- to 11-year-olds outweigh any potential risks — including a heart-related side effect that's been rare in teens and young adults despite their use of a much higher shot dose.</p> <p>The FDA isn't bound by the panel's recommendation and is expected to make its own decision within days.</p> <p>If the FDA authorizes the kid-size doses, there's still another step: Next week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will have to decide whether to recommend the shots and which youngsters should get them.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Tacoma clears encampment: now what?
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/tacoma-clears-encampment-raising-questions-about-where-its-residents-will-go

TACOMA, Wash. — Officers from the Tacoma Police Department and city workers have begun to clear out a homeless encampment that has taken root over the past year along several blocks near the Tacoma campus of The Evergreen State College.

But the clearing by municipal crews has raised questions about where the campers will end up. Some of them are set to go to temporary housing even as other residents said they will likely just find another spot on the street.

The campers were all given a 20-day notice that the site would be cleared, a decision triggered by the fact that officials said there are more than enough shelter spaces available for the 20 people who remained at the location.

City workers helped Dorinda Neighbour dismantle her tent and discard items she no longer wants but she has no plans to take them up on their offer to provide shelter even though she does not know where's she will go.

The city has cleared a homeless encampment but has raised questions about where its residents will end up.

"Not really sure," she said. "Just going to have the tent (and go) somewhere where they haven't posted no trespass yet."

Just down the way, Cheyenne Johnson said the same thing, vowing to take up residence on another street.

"Doesn't really make much sense," he said. "They're just pushing us around town. I think it's pretty pointless. I mean I put a lot of work into this place."

City officials said there are places other than Tacoma streets for those who want them.

"We certainly recognize that there are folks that prefer to live outside," said Allyson Griffith, a city spokesperson. "We can't compel anyone to take us up on this."

She said it is conceivable that the campers will migrate to another outside location.

"Yes, and unfortunately that may happen," Griffith said.

Some homeless advocates have criticized the camp sweeps, saying they are counter-productive.

"These people have built up a community where they're helping and working with one another," said Maria Arns, a homeless advocate who work with Lived Experience Coalition. "So now we're going to separate them from a comfort zone that has taken awhile for them to get into. And that's not a good thing. It's not okay."

Others, however, are taking Tacoma officials up on their offers of shelter, including John Sherrill. He is heading to a tiny home micro-shelter.

"Yes," he said. "Feels good."

Ronny Brown knows all about the path to success.

He had been in a similar encampment that was cleared at People's Park, but he now lives in his own place.

"Life is great," he said, adding that others can follow his path if they want it. "Got married (and) doing real well in my career. Yes, it's beautiful."

Vietnam veteran Ernie Jurek had been homeless and now has permanent housing.

	<p>He's getting a free phone so he can call for services and doesn't like seeing people who are still living in encampments.</p> <p>"This is like living in a third world country," he said. "Look around, all of these tents and garbage. It's a shame really."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/25 Oregon: record number job vacancies
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/open-for-business/oregon-reports-record-number-of-job-vacancies-as-businesses-compete-to-fill-positions
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. — The Oregon Employment Department said after months of growth, Oregon actually lost jobs in September instead of adding new ones.</p> <p>With an unemployment rate just under five percent, Oregon Employment Department economists tell KATU it's tough competition for a small work force.</p> <p>"I think we're seeing a record number of job vacancies. We had 107,000 job vacancies ... between July and September, and that is a huge increase. It's almost double what we were seeing in the winter," Gail Krumenauer said.</p> <p>At the national level, Krumenauer said about three percent of employees quit their job in the last month.</p> <p>"That is the highest quit rate they'd seen on record in the national economy and really, I think reflects people's ability to choose among the many jobs that are out there," she said.</p> <p>That number jumped to a seven percent quit rate for the hospitality industry. Now restaurants are adapting to stay afloat.</p> <p>owns restaurants across the greater Portland area. One area that is expanding is hospitality. Still, as the industry grows, restaurant owners like Kurt Huffman said filling those roles is the next challenge.</p> <p>"Whether it's our own staff, whether it's staff of people that we work with, whether it's even our accounting firm that we work with--we're basically in just kind of a crisis mode, constantly finding people to do the job," Huffman said.</p> <p>Huffman said he already increased prices to adapt over the last few months.</p> <p>"The more likely thing is we have to just continue increasing prices to make sure that at the end of all this we come out okay. That's very stressful for restaurant owners, because you hate raising your prices, because you don't want people to be less excited about coming in," Huffman said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 US, China sparring over Taiwan heats up
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-china-united-states-beijing-united-nations-0f27ca946b9fa97487af1ba8e80c3682
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and China are stepping up their war of words over Taiwan in a long-simmering dispute that has significant implications for the power dynamic in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.</p> <p>Amid a surge in Chinese military activity near the island that China regards as a renegade province and has vowed to reclaim by force if necessary, Washington and Beijing have launched new campaigns for global support for their respective positions, each using the stern and lofty language of sovereignty and international precedent. And neither is backing down.</p>

While the disagreement over Taiwan isn't new and has long vexed relations between the countries, recent developments suggest the two are coming closer to confrontation. Last week, President Joe Biden set off alarm bells in Beijing by saying the U.S. has a firm commitment to help Taiwan defend itself in the event of a Chinese attack.

China protested and the Biden administration sought to play down the comments. White House, State Department and Pentagon officials all said the president did not mean to imply any changes in the U.S. "one-China policy," which recognizes Beijing but allows informal relations and defense ties with Taipei.

The officials took pains to say that America's commitment to Taiwan remains steadfast but continues to be guided by a policy of "strategic ambiguity" over military-related specifics that falls short of a treaty-enshrined mutual defense pact. Since then, however, the administration has upped the ante on the diplomatic front.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday publicly urged other members of the United Nations to reject China's assertion of absolute sovereignty over Taiwan and join the U.S. in supporting Taipei's independent participation in international organizations related to transportation, health, climate change, culture and education.

"As the international community faces an unprecedented number of complex and global issues, it is critical for all stakeholders to help address these problems," Blinken said in a statement. "This includes the 24 million people who live in Taiwan. Taiwan's meaningful participation in the UN system is not a political issue, but a pragmatic one."

He noted that Taiwan has been prevented from participating in meetings of the International Civil Aviation Organization despite being a major transit hub and the World Health Organization despite having fielded an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Taiwan's exclusion undermines the important work of the UN and its related bodies, all of which stand to benefit greatly from its contributions," Blinken said. "That is why we encourage all UN Member States to join us in supporting Taiwan's robust, meaningful participation throughout the UN system and in the international community."

State Department spokesman Ned Price declined to elaborate on what the administration would define as "meaningful participation."

Blinken's statement came just five days after Biden's remarks about Taiwan's defense and only two days after the State Department announced that senior U.S. and Taiwanese officials met virtually to discuss expanding Taiwan's participation in UN and other international groupings.

In that Oct. 22 meeting, administration officials "reiterated the U.S. commitment to Taiwan's meaningful participation at the World Health Organization and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and discussed ways to highlight Taiwan's ability to contribute to efforts on a wide range of issues," the State Department said.

Apart from complaining about Biden's initial comments, China reacted angrily to that discussion, slamming the administration for making "irresponsible statements" that encourage Taiwanese independence and demanding a halt to U.S. "official contacts" with the island's government.

"Taiwan's participation in activities of the international organizations must be handled in accordance with the one-China principle," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said. "Taiwan's attempts to expand its so-called 'international space' with foreign support are in nature seeking to expand the space for 'Taiwan independence' and secession. It will surely end in failure."

The back-and-forth is playing out against a backdrop of increasing belligerence by both sides toward the other, even as they profess to have common interests on issues ranging from trade to climate to North Korea. Relations have plunged to new lows since nosediving under the Trump administration, which adopted a confrontational approach on trade, visas, diplomatic representation and educational exchanges.

While both former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden have been firm in their opposition to Chinese activities in Tibet, Hong Kong, China's western Xinjiang region and the South China Sea, the Taiwan issue pre-dates most of those irritants.

China has recently upped its threat to bring Taiwan under its control by force if necessary by flying warplanes near the island and rehearsing beach landings.

China and Taiwan split during a civil war in 1949. The U.S. cut formal diplomatic relations with Taipei in 1979 in order to recognize Beijing. The U.S. does not openly contest China's claim to Taiwan, but is committed by law to ensure the island can defend itself and to treat all threats toward it as matters of grave concern.

Under President Xi Jinping, who is also Communist Party leader and head of the armed forces, China has been stepping up military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan. Over its National Day weekend at the beginning of the month, China sent a record 149 military aircraft southwest of Taiwan in strike group formations, prompting Taiwan to scramble aircraft and activate its air defense missile systems.

China has also recently held beach landing exercises on its side of the roughly 160-kilometer-wide (100-mile-wide) Taiwan Strait, which, like the aircraft incursions, it described as a warning to Tsai Ing-wen's administration.

The U.S. has reinforced its support for Taiwan with military sales.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Gulf Arab states still tout oil
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/climate-technology-business-environment-and-nature-middle-east-c9f2733f576c570f70dcc1ef631403c5
GIST	<p>RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — The global energy transition is perhaps nowhere more perplexing than in the Arabian Peninsula, where Saudi Arabia and other Gulf monarchies are caught between two daunting climate change scenarios that threaten their livelihoods.</p> <p>In one, the world stops burning oil and gas to cut down on heat-trapping emissions, shaking the very foundation of their economies. In the other, global temperatures keep rising, at the risk of rendering unlivable much of the Gulf's already extremely hot terrain.</p> <p>The political stability of the six Gulf states — Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman — is rooted in profits from fossil fuels. This includes exports that energy-hungry China and India will want even more over the next two decades.</p> <p>“Climate action, it's almost an existential problem for an absolute monarchy based on oil exports,” said Jim Krane, author of “Energy Kingdoms: Oil and Political Survival in the Persian Gulf.”</p> <p>“They need climate action to succeed without wrecking the oil market. That's a tough needle to thread.”</p> <p>In pledging “net-zero” emissions targets as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain have done this month, greenhouse gas emissions would be cut within their borders — while maintaining fossil fuel exports abroad.</p>

Saudi Arabia, which supplies about one-tenth of the world's oil demand, made its announcement this week while hosting its first major climate change forum. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman set 2060 as Saudi Arabia's target.

It was an important announcement for a country with an estimated 265 billion barrels of oil reserves worth \$22.5 trillion at current prices. Saudi Arabia has expressed determination to pump oil until the last drop, but it could find little use for its greatest natural resource in a world that runs on cleaner forms of renewable and solar energy.

Gulf monarchies have used oil revenue to maintain domestic support, buy regional clout and expand influence. The money has built up national armies and provided citizens with cushy public sector jobs, free health care and higher education, subsidized fuel, land to build homes on, marriage dowries and generous pensions.

Without this patronage system, Gulf monarchies might have to allow greater political participation or turn more repressive, said Krane, an energy studies fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy in Texas.

Gulf Arab states pledging "net zero" emissions are positioning themselves to be part of the multi-trillion-dollar clean energy industry, even as they keep earning from oil and gas.

At the Saudi Green Initiative Forum in Riyadh, President Joe Biden's climate envoy, John Kerry, told a roomful of princes and prime ministers from across the region that climate action can create "the biggest market opportunity the world has ever known."

"It's the biggest transformation that has ever taken place on this planet, since the industrial revolution, if we do it," Kerry said.

The "net zero" pledges also crucially enable the Gulf's ruling elite to wield influence at conferences like COP26, where climate action policies are being crafted, said Ellen Wald, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council and author of "Saudi Inc."

"It's important for them to have a seat at the table and be taken seriously at these conferences... because that way they get a say," she said.

Saudi Arabia is one of several countries lobbying behind the scenes ahead of the COP26 summit to change language around emissions, apparently trying to water down an upcoming U.N. science panel report on global warming, according to leaked documents.

Gulf Arab states are privately and publicly advocating for carbon capture technologies rather than a rapid phasing out of fossil fuels, warning that a hurried transition would leave poorer populations without access to energy.

Greenpeace, which obtained the leaked documents, has criticized the approach, saying these "yet unproven" carbon capture technologies allow nations to emit more greenhouse gases on the optimistic assumption they can be drawn out of the atmosphere later.

Meanwhile, national energy companies like Saudi Aramco, Abu Dhabi's ADNOC and Qatar Petroleum — now re-branded as Qatar Energy — are moving ahead with efforts to reduce emissions and boost investments in petrochemical products used in fertilizers, plastics, rubber and other polymers that are in huge demand globally.

Aramco, by far the world's biggest oil company, announced it would reach "net zero" by 2050 on its operations, a decade sooner than the Saudi government's pledge. ADNOC has pledged to decrease its greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2030.

Qatar Petroleum has already shipped one carbon-neutral cargo of LNG gas to Singapore and will be incorporating carbon capture technology in its expansion plans, according to a report by the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.

Speaking at the forum in Riyadh, ADNOC CEO Sultan Al-Jaber called on people to be “a bit mature and sober” in discussing the energy transition, insisting it will take time and must include oil and gas.

“We can’t just come out of nowhere and all of a sudden speak about energy transition and completely ignore or underestimate the impact of oil and gas in helping meet global energy requirements,” Al-Jaber said, noting that 80% of total energy requirements currently come from fossil fuels, with 60% of that oil and gas.

OPEC forecasts that while the push for alternative and renewable energy will usher in an era of declining demand for oil in some parts of the world, it will remain the world’s No. 1 source of energy through 2045. It forecasts that of the 2.6 billion cars on the road by 2045, just 20% will be electric-powered.

Although all six Gulf states remain heavily reliant on fossil fuels for state spending, each has taken steps to try to diversify their economies, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE leading aggressive efforts to attract investment in new industries.

Still, over half of Saudi Arabia’s revenue comes from oil, with \$150 billion expected this year alone as prices climb to \$85 a barrel.

“Oil exports are the lifeblood of the Saudi economy and the Saudi political system,” said Krane. “It would be a disaster for Saudi Arabia if the rest of the world quickly weaned itself off oil.”

Scientists say the world must invest in renewable energy to limit warming to 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit (1.5 degrees Celsius), although a new U.N. report finds that even governments’ fresh pledges aren’t strict enough to keep temperature rises below that by the end of the century.

Nearly all of the warming that has happened on Earth can be blamed on emissions of heat-trapping gases such as carbon dioxide and methane, and if the limit is surpassed scientists say the damage will be irreversible.

In remarks to reporters this month, Qatari Energy Minister Saad al-Kaabi questioned whether countries that have “net-zero” pledges have a plan on how to get there.

“For me to just come out and say, ‘Net zero 2050’. Very sexy,” he said. “I mean, looks great in the newspaper, but it’s not the right thing.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 US, China, Russia join Asia summit
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-business-russia-asia-china-f7d0f3aec4e1e0f8e0baa4992e8149c1
GIST	<p>KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — President Joe Biden and China’s Premier Li Keqiang joined an annual summit of 18 Asia-Pacific nations by video Wednesday, as some regional leaders voiced concern about the sharpening of competition between major powers over trade, Taiwan, democracy and Beijing’s increasingly assertive actions in disputed territories.</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin will also speak at the East Asia Summit, a wide-ranging forum on political, security and economic issues organized by the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.</p> <p>The World Health Organization is expected to brief the leaders on the pandemic, which has set back the economies of the 18 countries representing more than half of the world’s population and accounting for over 60% of global GDP.</p>

A White House statement Wednesday said Biden will reaffirm U.S. support for the ASEAN-led regional architecture and discuss his vision for working together with allies and partners to address issues facing the Indo-Pacific region. It was the first time since 2017 that a U.S. president is attending the summit, part of three-day high-level meetings hosted by Brunei, ASEAN's chair this year

During a separate meeting with ASEAN leaders Tuesday, Biden announced a \$100 million initiative to beef up U.S. engagement with the region in the face of China's growth as a national security and economic adversary. Biden called the U.S. relationship with the bloc "essential." The funding will cover health spending, a new climate initiative, education and programs to bolster economic recovery.

"I want you all to hear directly from me the importance the United States places on its relationship with ASEAN," Biden said. "You can expect to see me showing up and reaching out to you."

Relations between Washington and Beijing have plunged to new lows since nosediving under former President Donald Trump's administration, which adopted a confrontational approach on trade, visas, diplomatic representation and educational exchanges.

A long-simmering dispute over Taiwan flared up recently after Biden said the U.S. has a firm commitment to help the self-ruled island, which China claims as part of its territory, in the event of an attack.

The U.S. nuclear submarine deal with Australia and the U.K. has also angered China, which claims most of the disputed South China Sea and warned the pact would threaten regional stability.

Some ASEAN nations such as Indonesia and Malaysia also fear the pact could escalate tensions in hot spots such as the South China Sea and spark an arms race.

"Indonesia does not want this region to become an arms race and a power projection that can threaten stability," Indonesian President Joko Widodo told his Australian counterpart Scott Morrison, according to Indonesia's foreign minister.

Australia announced a \$93 million package to support security, climate and health efforts in Southeast Asia, while Morrison defended the new pact with the U.S. and UK., saying it does not change Australia's commitment to ASEAN or the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific — "indeed it reinforces it."

He said Australia had no intention of acquiring nuclear weapons and remained deeply committed to nuclear non-proliferation.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said his country shared serious concern with ASEAN about challenges to the free and open maritime order in the East and South China seas, according to Japan's Foreign ministry.

He did not mention China by name, but Tokyo has more become vocal in defending the freedom of navigation and resolution of disputes based on international law, at a time China expands its military power beyond its shores, rattling neighbors with the construction of man-made islands and sending ships near their coasts.

The three-day ASEAN meetings have been clouded by a diplomatic standoff after military-ruled Myanmar skipped the summit in protest of ASEAN's move to bar Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, whose forces seized power in February, from attending.

ASEAN's censure of Myanmar was its boldest after the bloc's envoy was prevented from meeting ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other political detainees as part of a proposed dialogue to ease the crisis that has left more than 1,100 mostly anti-military protesters killed.

During the ASEAN leaders' talks with Australia Wednesday, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong expressed concern over the detention in Myanmar of Australian academician Sean Turnell, who served as an economic adviser to Suu Kyi's government. Morrison thanked Lee for the concern, a Southeast Asian diplomat, who took part in the meeting, told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to discuss the discussions publicly.

Myanmar has refused to send a junior representative to the summit, and slammed ASEAN's move as going against the bloc's principles of non-interference in each other's affairs and decision-making by consensus. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said Myanmar's decision to snub the summit was "regrettable" and hinted he may also consider not inviting the military-led nation's top general to a video summit of more than 50 Asian and European countries Cambodia will host next month, the diplomat said.

There have been concerns that European leaders may skip the summit and just send lower-ranking representatives if the Myanmar general will be allowed to join, according to the diplomat.

Biden on Tuesday denounced the military in Myanmar for its use of "horrific violence" against protesters and pledged U.S. support for the nation's return to democracy.

In a chairman's statement released after the summit Tuesday, the bloc's leaders urged Myanmar to give its envoy, Brunei Second Foreign Minister Eryan Yusof, full access to all parties and release political detainees.

While respecting ASEAN's principle of non-interference, the bloc said it must also strike a balance in terms of rule of law, good governance, democracy and constitutional government in Myanmar's situation.

"We reiterated that Myanmar remains a member of the ASEAN family and recognized that Myanmar needs both time and political space to deal with its many and complex challenges," the group said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Officials: threats after 2020 elections
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-business-arizona-state-elections-senate-elections-b0b60e45247760601552a3984af0414d
GIST	<p>PHOENIX (AP) — Election officials told a congressional committee Tuesday they've received graphic threats to their safety since the 2020 election and warned that pressure on election workers is a threat to democracy.</p> <p>Experienced election administrators are increasingly leaving the field as they face unsupported accusations of manipulating election results, a bipartisan group of state election officials told the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.</p> <p>"It's not worth it any more for these not-very-high-paying jobs, combined with the level of threat they're experiencing at the moment," Arizona Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, a Democrat who is running for governor, said.</p> <p>Hobbs has at times had round-the-clock security due to threats from supporters of former President Donald Trump who falsely claim that his loss in Arizona was marred by fraud. She described threatening phone calls to her office and said critics tried to get her husband fired from his job.</p> <p>"Let's be clear, this is domestic terrorism," said Al Schmidt, a Republican city commissioner in Philadelphia and a member of the Board of Elections. "The whole point is to terrorize, to intimidate and to coerce."</p> <p>Threatening phone calls died down after President Joe Biden was sworn in but have since ratcheted back up since Trump supporters have pushed for the Legislature to review the 2020 vote count, he said.</p>

	<p>Cybersecurity and election administration experts in the Trump administration said the 2020 election was secure, and no evidence have widespread fraud has been found. But Trump and an army of his supporters have aggressively promoted the false narrative that the election was stolen from him and have pushed for audits led by people who share their views.</p> <p>Most prominently, a post-election review led by the Arizona Senate Republicans confirmed Biden's victory in Maricopa County but spread falsehoods about malfeasance that ignored basic facts about how elections are run.</p> <p>Michael Adams, the Republican Secretary of State of Kentucky said said he's faced verbal abuse from Democrats accusing him of promoting vote suppression.</p> <p>An exodus of experienced election workers would have ripple effects that undermine the ability to efficiently run trustworthy elections, experts said.</p> <p>"That could mean longer wait times, closure of polling places, a rise of voter intimidation and harassment at the polls and widespread loss of confidence in elections," said Wade Henderson, interim president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Govt. crackdown intensifies in Cuba
SOURCE	https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/cuba/article255273001.html
GIST	<p>Cuban authorities have threatened organizers of a pro-democracy march called for November with legal charges, while conducting a vast security operation to intimidate ordinary Cubans who express support of the initiative or criticize the government on social media.</p> <p>Members of the civic group Archipiélago notified authorities of its intention to march on November 15 to advocate the respect of civil liberties and to call for the release of political prisoners and hundreds of protesters still detained after an islandwide uprising on July 11.</p> <p>The group, created by young artists, professionals, activists and longtime dissidents, said the Cuban Constitution allows peaceful demonstrations. Cuban authorities interpreted the Constitution in different terms, calling the march "illicit" and a regime change plot backed by the United States and Cuban exiles.</p> <p>On Sunday, Cuban leader Miguel Díaz Canel said the planned march was not a "civic act but an act of subordination" to the U.S., which he accused of planning the initiative to "subvert" the internal order. "The declared objective of the U.S government is to overthrow the Cuban Revolution," Díaz-Canel said during a Communist Party meeting on Sunday. "We are prepared and willing to do anything to defend what is most sacred, what unites us; to be consistent with the invariable decision of Homeland or Death, Socialism or Death."</p> <p>Last Thursday, the General Attorney's office said in a statement that if Archipiélago members move ahead with the march, they will face serious charges, including "disobedience, illicit demonstrations, instigation to commit a crime or others foreseen and sanctioned in the current criminal legislation."</p> <p>The government is also using its security forces and state media to push the same message. In the past several weeks, state media outlets, including the country's largest newspapers and television channels, have been discrediting the young activists by portraying them as mercenaries paid by organizations connected to the U.S. government — accusations they have denied.</p> <p>"Monolithic thinking, censorship, and political persecution have been the bread and butter for Cubans who do not submit to the control of their masters," said actor and playwright Yunior García, one of Archipiélago's leaders in a statement. "No one would be such an idiot to face all this (and the fury to come) for money. We do it out of convictions, and that gets those in power desperate. Nor does anyone give us orders from anywhere."</p>

Meanwhile, state security, the intelligence agency controlled by the Ministry of Interior, has been conducting an islandwide operation to intimidate members and supporters of Archipiélago, according to interviews conducted by the Herald and information shared on social media.

The repressive actions reported include short arrests, fines, citations to a police station for interrogation, cuts in the internet and phone services, repudiation acts, prohibitions to travel abroad, harassment to family members and job firings. And there is at least one report of a brief kidnapping.

Leinier Cruz Salfrán, a march planner in Guantánamo, an eastern province, was fined 3,000 Cuban pesos because authorities said videos he published on social media violated the “internal order” as stipulated in the decrees 35 and 370, he said in an audio message shared with the Herald. Both decrees have been widely criticized as curtailing civil liberties and freedom of expression.

Cruz Salfrán said after he left the Ministry of Communications office where he was fined on Friday, state security officials told him to get into an old Russian car for a “talk.” “They asked for my phone, and I gave it to them; I would not resist,” he said. “Two people that I assumed were also state security agents got on the backseats beside me. Immediately after, they forced me to lower my head, and they hooded me. I know it is better not to resist this sort of treatment, but I struggle a bit because they wanted to choke me, which gives me nausea and makes me feel very sick.”

The activist, targeted because he notified authorities of the march in Guantánamo, said the agents took him to an unknown location where he was threatened during an hour-long interrogation. “I will not give more details, so I don’t transmit the message they want to promote,” he said. The agents later dropped him near his home. Several members of Archipiélago are under surveillance at home. García had his home entrance vandalized with dead animals. And two doctors connected to the group, Manuel Guerra and David Martínez, were fired from their state-paid jobs.

AN INTIMIDATION CAMPAIGN

But as frustration with the Cuban regime grows, it is not only the pro-democracy activists but also a larger swath of the population having firsthand encounters with the repressive apparatus. The government is particularly nervous after the protests in July, and the march’s plans have shown discontent is widespread.

The tactics are not new and have been deployed throughout the decades against political dissidents, independent journalists, and lately, against young artists. But in the past weeks, social media influencers and generally anyone who expresses an opinion against the island’s authorities have become a target.

Rafael Santos Regalado, a young Cuban software engineer living in Havana, had never been in a police station until earlier this month. There, state security agents warned him against posting political content on social media, including what they thought were manipulated images of a young Fidel Castro seated and looking at the camera, a pile of dollar bills laying at the table in front of him.

The images were authentic, taken at a fundraiser with Cuban emigres in 1955 in New York. Santos tweeted them to question accusations by government officials that the organizers of the march are receiving financial support from Cuban exiles. “I am NOT a criminal; I am NOT a terrorist, freedom of expression is a RIGHT that I will never renounce,” he said on Twitter before attending the interview with the officers. Santos was fined 3,000 Cuban pesos for promoting the march and let go. Thanks to his social media followers on the island, he got the money to pay it in less than an hour. He and other young activists celebrated on Twitter. Then he was summoned again by the police. This time, the threats were blunter, he told the Herald.

“They told me that if violence erupts on November 15, they will blame me because they said I was promoting violence,” he said.

Jonathan Valdés Vega, 32, a tech technician who administers a large Facebook group of iPhone users in Cuba, was also interrogated by the police in Havana earlier this month, he said in an interview. He

believes someone informed authorities he was trying to make personalized T-shirts to wear during the march. He said state security agents were particularly worried that he would share political content with his thousands of followers. Even a “like” can get a Cuban in trouble.

Caridad Otero, a 60-year-old pensioner living in Camaguey in central Cuba, was threatened with charges for “liking” political content on Facebook, according to legal aid organization Cubalex. The crackdown is unfolding in real time on social media.

“They are trying to use the same repression techniques before social media changed things, and it’s obvious they don’t understand how they work, they don’t have tools to deal with the social media revolution,” said Saily González, a Cuban entrepreneur who became one of the more visible voices of Archipiélago.

“Every time they harass someone, that’s another family that realizes that one cannot live without rights.”

In an interview from Santa Clara, she said young Cubans who have created communities on social networks like Twitter now support each other more. She cited the quick crowdfunding effort to pay for Santos’ fine and the recent release of doctor Guerra, the Archipiélago member who was fired, after several social media users denounced his arrest earlier this month.

González was herself the subject of a repudiation act near her house. She decided to close her cafe Amarillo B&B in Santa Clara because she feared state security would use her private business to retaliate against her and her employees because of her activism.

“Being an entrepreneur and activist should not be a danger to the people around you,” she said on Twitter, adding her business will reopen when “freedom of thought and expression of all Cubans are respected.” But the government has made clear it would not tolerate dissent. Last week, a man who protested against the government on July 11 was given a 10-year sentence.

Others face charges that could lock them up in prison for up to 25 years. Images of state workers and members of the CDRs, a neighborhood surveillance organization, armed with clubs, baseball bats and what appear to be old Russian guns rehearsing to confront would-be protesters, are circulating on social media, another dire warning to those considering attending the march.

Díaz-Canel, who faced criticism for inciting government supporters to confront July 11 demonstrators by any means, said Sunday the Cuban Constitution, which establishes socialism is “irrevocable,” calls on citizens to do just that. “Citizens have the right to fight by all means against anyone who tries to overthrow the political, social, and economic order established by the Constitution,” he said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Covid cases, deaths rise again in Europe
SOURCE	https://www.rte.ie/news/coronavirus/2021/1026/1255839-covid-global/
GIST	<p>Covid-19 infections and deaths are on the rise again in Europe, with Russia, Ukraine and Romania registering the highest fatalities on the continent, an AFP tally shows.</p> <p>About 1,672,000 new cases have been registered on the continent over the past week, an average of about 239,000 per day.</p> <p>That was an increase of 18% on the previous week, according to AFP's data, compiled from official sources from 52 countries and territories in the region.</p> <p>The increase in cases was a 60% jump from August and September, when were about 150,000 new registered cases per day, the data showed.</p>

In the region, 42 countries saw an increase in new infections over the past week, with only seven countries clocking a drop.

The worst affected countries in terms of total new cases are Ukraine, Hungary and Poland.

When per capita infections rates are taken into account, Latvia, Estonia and Georgia are hardest hit.

Kosovo, Luxemburg and Malta have seen the sharpest declines.

The current numbers remain below the daily record for the region, which registered an average of 284,000 cases per day between 2-8 November 2020.

But Europe now accounts for 55% of all new cases globally. Deaths are also on the rise.

AFP data showed an average of 3,120 daily deaths on the continent in the previous seven days, up 16% from last week.

It is the first time deaths in the region have exceeded 3,000 daily deaths since May, though current numbers are still far from the record of an average of 5,735 deaths every day from 14 to 20 January this year.

More than a third of the deaths recorded in Europe are currently in Russia, which reported 1,051 deaths on average every day, followed by Ukraine (485) and Romania (420).

Bulgaria reports record number of virus Covid-19 and infections

Bulgaria reported record numbers of daily coronavirus deaths and infections as a fourth wave of the disease is stretching the health system in the European Union's least vaccinated member state.

New infections in the previous 24 hours topped 5,863 while 243 people died of the virus, official data showed.

The pandemic has killed 23,316 people in Bulgaria.

Faced with surging infections and frustrated by the slow take-up of vaccines, the Balkan country of 7 million people has made health passes mandatory for most indoor public venues.

The new restrictions have prompted protests and some political parties have accused the interim government of failing to manage the pandemic ahead of parliamentary elections on 14 November.

Health authorities have warned that failure to slow the new wave of the disease may trigger tougher restrictions as hospitals struggle to deal with more Covid-19 patients.

More than 7,100 people are in Covid wards, including 608 of them in intensive care. More than 90% of the patients were not vaccinated, data showed.

Vaccinations have picked up since last Thursday, when authorities limited access to restaurants, cinemas and gyms, among other venues, to those who are vaccinated, have recovered from the virus or have a negative Covid-19 test.

Still, Bulgaria, where vaccine scepticism runs high amid entrenched mistrust of state authorities and contradictory messages from politicians and experts, has managed to fully inoculate only 24% of its adult population compared with an EU average of 74%.

Spain to give booster dose of Pfizer or Moderna to people who had J&J shot

Spain will give a booster injection of coronavirus vaccines manufactured by Pfizer or Moderna to people who received Johnson & Johnson's single dose, the Health Ministry has said.

From 15 November, around two million people in the country who had the J&J vaccine will get a booster shot, three months after their first vaccine, the ministry said in a statement.

With some 88.5% of its population fully vaccinated, Spain has one of the highest rates of inoculation against Covid-19 in Europe.

Earlier this month, the government began giving out third doses of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to people aged 70 or over.

The incidence of the virus as measured over the preceding 14 days edged up yesterday to 46.4 cases per 100,000 people but remains below the 50 case threshold deemed to be low-risk by the government.

Russia's daily Covid deaths hit new record at 1,106

Russia has reported 1,106 Covid-19 deaths in the past 24 hours, the highest figure since the start of the pandemic, amid a surge in new cases that has prompted authorities to reimpose partial lockdown measures.

The daily toll has hit new records in six of the past eight days.

The state Covid-19 task force also reported 36,446 new infections, compared with 37,930 a day earlier.

Russia will go into a nationwide workplace shutdown in the first week of November, and the capital Moscow will reimpose a partial lockdown from 28 October, with only essential shops like pharmacies and supermarkets allowed to remain open.

Authorities have blamed the rising deaths and infections on slow vaccination rates.

As an incentive, President Vladimir Putin has ordered that people who get injected should be given two paid days off work.

Hong Kong to further tighten Covid travel restrictions

Hong Kong will tighten coronavirus travel restrictions to bring it more into line with the Chinese mainland, its leader said, as the city extended its streak of more than two months without a major local outbreak.

The announcement came despite concerns from the international hub's business community that the city remains indefinitely cut off from the rest of the world, with one of the strictest mandatory quarantine regimes of any jurisdiction.

Most arrivals have to undergo 14 to 21 days of hotel quarantine.

Chief Executive Carrie Lam said Hong Kong will now go even further as she tries to persuade China's leaders to restore travel with the mainland.

"Soon we will ... announce that most of the quarantine exemptions granted to specific groups of visitors coming from overseas and mainland will be cancelled," Ms Lam said, adding only essential workers such as cross-border truck drivers would be allowed to make quarantine-free trips.

At present, Hong Kong allows certain groups of people to skip quarantine or isolate at home. They include diplomats and business leaders as well as some mainlanders with Hong Kong resident cards.

Ms Lam did not detail which categories would now be denied exemptions.

	Last month, Hollywood star Nicole Kidman was allowed to skip quarantine to shoot a television series, a decision that sparked much public anger.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 CDC: immunocompromised 4th Covid shot
SOURCE	https://www.axios.com/cdc-immunocompromised-covid-fourth-shot-1b47635c-c464-4d29-9832-3d94ea1cecf9.html
GIST	<p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in updated guidelines Tuesday that some immunocompromised people who have received either Pfizer or Moderna's COVID-19 vaccines will be able to get a fourth shot.</p> <p>Details: People over 18 who are "moderately to severely immunocompromised" and have received three doses of an mRNA vaccine may get a fourth shot (of either the Pfizer, Moderna, or Johnson & Johnson vaccines) at least six months after getting their third Pfizer or Moderna dose, per the CDC.</p> <p>Worth noting: For immunocompromised people, the third COVID-19 vaccine shot is classified as an "additional dose" by the CDC, and the volume given is the same as that of the first two shots.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For such people, however, the fourth dose is considered a "booster," and the volume given is only half the amount given in the first three doses. <p>The CDC last week gave its approval for Americans to get booster shots that are different from the COVID vaccine they initially received.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Olympics in view: China Covid outbreak
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/27/china/covid-outbreak-lockdown-mic-intl-hnk/index.html
GIST	<p>Hong Kong (CNN) Wednesday marks the start of the 100-day countdown to the Beijing Winter Olympics, but not everyone is in the mood to celebrate, as officials instead race to suppress a widening outbreak of Covid-19.</p> <p>Come February, the Chinese capital will become the first city to host both the Summer and Winter Olympics -- which is seen as a major point of pride for China. But it also faces ample challenges.</p> <p>In addition to growing calls for a boycott over China's crackdown on Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, the Winter Games also risk being overshadowed by the pandemic -- and China's uncompromising zero-Covid policy.</p> <p>In 2008, the 100-day countdown to the Summer Games was marked by an anticipatory buzz across the capital -- with music performances, a big marathon relay around the Olympic Green and even church prayers.</p> <p>This time around, it appears to be a much more muted affair, with much of the city bunkering down amid a new wave of coronavirus infections.</p> <p>Since October 17, China has recorded more than 200 local infections in about a dozen provinces and municipalities -- and health officials have warned that the outbreak will likely worsen in the coming days.</p> <p>By international standards the current outbreak would be considered comparatively small, but in China, even one case represents a challenge to the country's zero-Covid approach, which necessitates the total elimination of the virus. As a result, China's borders remain tightly sealed, with stringent and lengthy quarantine measures in place for all international arrivals.</p> <p>The Winter Games will pose the biggest test yet of China's Covid control measures, with thousands of international athletes and other participants set to arrive in Beijing.</p>

Chinese organizers have come up with a solution to hold the Games in a bubble around Beijing, which will cover all stadiums and competition venues, as well as accommodation, catering, and the opening and closing ceremonies.

Athletes and other participants who are fully vaccinated will be allowed to enter the bubble without quarantine. Those who are not fully vaccinated, meanwhile, will have to spend 21 days in quarantine upon arrival. And throughout the Games, they will be required to stay within the bubble, hence avoiding any contact with local residents.

The Chinese capital has always been a top priority in the country's zero-Covid policy. Most international flights arriving in China land not in Beijing, but in cities such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Shanghai.

And now, amid the widening outbreak, Beijing has tightened entry restrictions for domestic travelers too.

Last week, flights to the capital from Chinese cities with known infections were [canceled](#). And beginning this week, officials banned entry for people who had visited localities with infections within the past 14 days -- even if they are Beijing residents who want to return home. Other domestic travelers are required to present a negative coronavirus test and undergo 14 days of health monitoring.

The city also suspended its annual marathon, originally scheduled for October 31, while the arrival of the Olympic flame last week was marked with a low-key ceremony attended by a small audience.

On Tuesday, some residents [posed for photos](#) in front of a countdown board for the Winter Olympics in the city's main shopping street; Beijing organizers marked the 100-day countdown by [unveiling the medals](#) for the Games.

Elsewhere in China, the Covid response has been even more aggressive.

In northwestern Gansu province, authorities locked down Lanzhou, the provincial capital with a population of 4 million, after it reported six cases on Tuesday. (The city reported a total of 39 cases over the past week.) Residents were told not to leave home except for seeking essential supplies or medical treatment, tourists were forbidden from leaving the city, while bus and taxi services had already been suspended.

In Ejin Banner, a city of 35,000 people in Inner Mongolia and a popular tourist destination, all residents and tourists were ordered to stay in their homes or hotel rooms starting Monday. The city also sacked its Communist Party chief and punished six other officials, including the director of the local health commission, for their failure to curb the latest outbreak (the city has reported a total of 89 cases).

The rapid spread of the virus comes despite about 75% of China's population -- or more than a billion people -- being fully vaccinated. To improve public immunity, Chinese authorities have rolled out booster shots and launched a nationwide campaign to vaccinate children between 3 to 11 years old.

The efficacy of Chinese vaccines, especially in face of the highly infectious Delta variant, has long raised concerns. But Yanzhong Huang, a senior fellow for global health at the Council for Foreign Relations, said even the best vaccines can't fulfill the zero-Covid goal set by the Chinese government.

In many countries, breakthrough cases have been reported among people fully immunized with more effective vaccines, such as those produced by Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna.

While a growing list of countries are switching to a new approach of living with the virus, China has doubled down on its model of zero-tolerance, with voices advocating for a shift of approach criticized, silenced or even punished.

"It's a dilemma. If they open up now, you will see a rapid increase in Covid cases. People are used to zero infections so they might question the wisdom of a policy shift," Huang said.

While the zero-Covid strategy remains broadly popular among the Chinese public, there are growing signs that some residents are fed up with the lockdowns.

Last week, police in Beijing detained two residents for trying to climb over the fences of their locked-down gated community -- a rare breach of Covid restrictions among the largely compliant Chinese public.

On Tuesday, [Beijing police said](#) another resident in the same gated community had been arrested for allegedly beating up a community worker while seeking to leave the compound via a parking garage.

In Ruili, a city on China's border with Myanmar, residents have [taken to social media](#) to complain about the extended, stringent lockdowns that have derailed their lives. The city relies heavily on border trade and tourism and has faced recurring outbreaks since March, leaving many families with no income, according to the [posts](#) -- some of which have been [censored](#).

Huang said after the Beijing Winter Games, there will be a "window of opportunity" for China to shift its pandemic policy.

But the ruling Communist Party is also due to hold its 20th National Congress later in the year -- when the country's leader Xi Jinping is expected to seek a third term in power -- and would aim to ensure social and political stability at all cost, Huang said.

"To ensure a smooth transition of the leadership, that policy might be sustained through late next year," he added.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Cargo shipwreck removal Georgia coast
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/26/us/georgia-golden-ray-cargo-ship-wreck-removal-largest-in-us-history/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)An official providing an update on the Golden Ray wreck removal off the coast of Georgia said it is the largest in United States history and required more than 3 million collective man-hours.</p> <p>The 656-foot cargo ship was carrying 4,100 vehicles when it capsized in St. Simons Sound near Brunswick in September 2019, resulting in more than \$200 million in damage.</p> <p>Wreck removal personnel Monday removed the final section of the cargo ship Monday, the US Coast Guard Southeast said in a release.</p> <p>The removal was "a difficult and complicated operation" and required experts from around the world, Commander Efren Lopez, US Coast Guard Federal On-Scene Coordinator, said in Tuesday's update.</p> <p>"We have accomplished a great feat. Over the last two years we have rescued 23 crew members, four of which were stuck inside the engine compartment for over 30 hours, none sustaining life-threatening injuries. Now we have completed the largest wreck removal in US history," Lopez said at a news conference in Brunswick.</p> <p>The cargo ship's capsizing was caused by incorrect calculations about the vessel's stability, the National Transportation Safety Board said last month.</p> <p>The NTSB also found two watertight doors had been left open, which caused the vessel to flood after it capsized. The flooding trapped four crew members who were later rescued.</p>

The rescue crew had to navigate "extreme environmental conditions," said Chris Graff, Response Director for Gallagher Marine Systems.

Crews have removed more than 8,000 pounds of ship-related debris from the water and shore and 9,500 pounds of non-ship related trash.

"So the beaches and marshes are probably as clean as they have been in many years," Graff said.

Matt Cook, Project Manager for TNT Salvage, said a mile-long environmental protection barrier enclosing 30 acres was constructed "to minimize the release of floating hydrocarbon and large pieces of debris."

Workers began disassembling the wreckage in February 2020.

The salvage operation removed 45,000 short tons of material, including wreckage and mud, Cook said.

John Maddox, Emergency Response Manager for the Environmental Protection Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, said it may take months or years for the St. Simon Sound to return to its baseline condition.

"While pollution threat continues to reduce, it has not been eliminated," Maddox said.

The Golden Ray left the Port of Brunswick at 1 a.m. on September 8, 2019, after unloading and loading vehicles and was on its way to Baltimore. As the vessel made a turn to the right, it heeled quickly to its left side, eventually settling at an angle of 90 degrees, the NTSB report said.

In a public hearing last year, Capt. Jonathan Tennant, who steered the ship out of the port, said everything seemed normal before it capsized.

Fire, flooding and saltwater corrosion meant the ship was declared a total loss estimated at \$62.5 million, the NTSB said in its report, and an estimated \$142 million worth of cargo was lost.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Homeless authority Seattle vision: \$27M
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/homelessness-authority-begins-to-present-a-vision-for-downtown-seattle-recovery-with-a-price-tag/
GIST	<p>The Regional Homelessness Authority has set its sights on downtown Seattle in the first major policy and financial proposal since its CEO started work.</p> <p>Chief Executive Marc Dones is asking for \$27 million for new facilities and outreach in an effort to solve chronic homelessness. The first deployment will be in what is likely the toughest Seattle neighborhood to make a dent in — the urban core. The idea appeals to business groups and politicians who have been clamoring for a solution to an increase in visible homelessness downtown, but it has also raised suspicions about why that area is being prioritized.</p> <p>If the proposal is funded and goes well, though, it could be proof that the new Regional Homelessness Authority's leader can solve homelessness throughout the county.</p> <p>"We need to pick a place, and we need to have impact," Dones said. "We can't do everything simultaneously and expect to do it well."</p> <p>Before the pandemic, downtown accounted for more than half the city's jobs and tax revenue. As the pandemic stretches on, it has been called a "ghost town," where 163 street-level businesses were shuttered in less than a year. For a while, it seemed like the majority of people left in downtown were those living on its streets or in its shelters, and the people in the shelters, clinics and day centers helping them. One study documented an increase of 100 tents downtown as shelters shrank because of overcrowding.</p>

There are about 800 unsheltered people downtown, according to the authority, most of them sleeping in alleys or tents on sidewalks and struggling with a combination of mental illness and drug use disorders.

As downtown sputters back toward normal, powerful business players such as the Downtown Seattle Association have pushed to make what they call “recovery” there a central issue in the November local election.

“We’ve by default, in a lot of ways, turned the sidewalks and streets of downtown into a mental health facility without any treatment,” said Jon Scholes, president of the Downtown Seattle Association, who is enthusiastic about Dones’ plan. “That spills into ground-floor businesses, I think, daily.”

Nearly \$20 million of Dones’ proposal would go to fund a 150-bed “high acuity” facility, staffed with clinicians, that would serve the people often seen wandering downtown in distress, dealing with significant psychiatric issues compounded by use of drugs like methamphetamine.

“They’re often absolutely alone, because their behaviors are sometimes too extreme to even be held by the community of an encampment,” Dones said. “We can’t continue to operate a system that doesn’t provide anything for folks who are in that situation.”

Dones estimates there are more than 100 people in this situation downtown.

The rest will be prioritized for rent vouchers and low-income housing with support services that would open next year. About \$7 million of Dones’ ask would go to create a new “peer navigation” system, where professionals who’ve experienced homelessness would guide people not just off the streets but through the mazelike housing system into a more permanent home.

Seattle City Councilmember Andrew Lewis, who represents the downtown core, said the city’s waterfront investments along with tourism could “really drag the city out of the malaise of the pandemic.” This would likely help, he said.

Lewis said he feels confident Seattle City Council and King County will figure out how to pay for the proposed investments together, pointing out that King County’s government offices sprawl through downtown as well, in between City Hall and the Regional Homelessness Authority offices. Employees of the county and the courts have been pressuring city and county leaders [for months to improve safety for them as they return to work](#).

Many of the city’s shelters are concentrated downtown, and outreach workers have reported that when people are displaced from encampments in other parts of the city, they migrate downtown, Lewis said. For that reason and others, Dones does not want to build the high-acuity facility or a majority of new housing units downtown.

“The same way we say to the region writ large that there’s a concentration in Seattle and we need to balance new infrastructure, we say to the city writ large that there’s a concentration in downtown and we need to balance where we put new infrastructure,” Dones said.

Prioritizing an area with such deep pockets might garner sidelong glances from critics of big business’s influence in homelessness strategy. City Council President and mayoral candidate M. Lorena González has insisted throughout her campaign that economic recovery efforts have [focused too much on downtown corporations](#) that have lobbied against corporate taxes she and her council colleagues have tried to levy.

Alison Eisinger, director of the Seattle-King County Coalition on Homelessness, declined to comment on the downtown focus but did say the council during budget season should be prioritizing paying shelter workers better. Longtime low pay and turnover issues at homelessness nonprofits have been exacerbated this year by [a labor shortage, putting shelters in a position](#) where they’re often losing workers as fast as they replace them, making it hard to open new facilities.

	<p>Adjusting pay “has to be a key priority for anyone who wants to maintain and add services,” Eisinger said.</p> <p>Zaneta Reid, a community activist who has been homeless and sits on the governing board overseeing the Regional Homelessness Authority, supports Dones’ budget proposals but wonders about focusing on downtown first. The last count before the pandemic estimated there were more than 4,000 homeless people with serious mental illness countywide.</p> <p>“We’ve got high-acuity needs all over, in other parts of the county too,” said Reid, who listened to Dones present the plan Thursday. “I mean, it’s bad downtown, but maybe [this move] is because there are so many folks that make so much money down there.”</p> <p>Dones thinks focusing on the entire county and its needs all at once would be a losing strategy. Long-term, Dones’ plan for making a speedy but heavy dent in visible homelessness includes raising \$1 billion dollars from the private sector to buy bridge housing, where thousands of people can get off the streets while they convalesce and look for better housing or wait for it to be built.</p> <p>While this first step may gain buy-in from big-pocket interests, Dones sees this move as “an alignment of a whole bunch of interests, instead of giving way to one interest or another.”</p> <p>“I think that the logic here is not how can we appease all the businesses, although certainly we want to support them,” Dones said. “It’s saying, ‘This is where people go, and so this is where we support people.’”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Thanksgiving feast to wallop the wallet
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/life/food-drink/this-years-thanksgiving-feast-will-wallop-the-wallet/
GIST	<p>Thanksgiving 2021 could be the most expensive meal in the history of the holiday.</p> <p>Caroline Hoffman is already stashing canned pumpkin in the kitchen of her Chicago apartment when she finds some for under a dollar. She recently spent almost \$2 more for the vanilla she’ll need to bake pumpkin bread and other desserts for the various Friendsgiving celebrations she’s been invited to.</p> <p>Matthew McClure paid 20% more this month than he did last year for the 25 pasture-raised turkeys he plans to roast at the Hive, the Bentonville, Arkansas, restaurant where he is the executive chef. And Norman Brown, director of sweet-potato sales for Wada Farms in Raleigh, North Carolina, is paying truckers nearly twice as much as usual to haul the crop to other parts of the country.</p> <p>“I never seen anything like it, and I’ve been running sweet potatoes for 38 or 39 years,” Brown said. “I don’t know what the answer is, but in the end it’s all going to get passed on to the consumer.”</p> <p>Nearly every component of the traditional American Thanksgiving dinner, from the disposable aluminum turkey roasting pan to the coffee and pie, will cost more this year, according to agricultural economists, farmers and grocery executives. Major food companies like Nestlé and Procter & Gamble have already warned consumers to brace for more price increases.</p> <p>Granted, last year the cost of a Thanksgiving dinner for 10 was the lowest it had been since 2010, according to the American Farm Bureau, whose annual survey of large dinners will be released Nov. 18. But because of the pandemic, fewer people bought for big gatherings, and turkey prices were kept low to entice shoppers. This year, turkey prices are likely to hit record highs, and the cost of many foods has jumped sharply.</p> <p>There is no single culprit. The nation’s food supply has been battered by a knotted supply chain, high transportation expenses, labor shortages, trade policies and bad weather. Inflation is at play, too. In</p>

September, the Consumer Price Index for food was up 4.6% from a year ago. Prices for meat, poultry, fish and eggs soared 10.5%.

Weeks before the holiday feast, home cooks have started shopping, hoping to get ahead of shortages and price creep. “I picture a perfect storm of increased demand and lack of supply,” said Matt Lardie, a food writer in Durham, North Carolina, who has already laid out his Thanksgiving game plan and expects to have some components in the freezer by next week.

For many cooks, the biggest expense will be the turkey. By the end of the year, market analysts say, prices per pound will likely surpass the record Department of Agriculture benchmark price for turkeys — \$1.36, set in 2015.

Turkey is more expensive largely because the price of corn, which most commercial turkeys feed on, more than doubled in some parts of the country from July 2020 to July 2021. Whole frozen birds between 8 and 16 pounds already cost 25 cents a pound more than they did a year ago, according to the weekly Department of Agriculture turkey report released Friday.

The price rises are hitting in a year when COVID-19 vaccines and loosened health guidelines point to more and bigger holiday celebrations than in 2020. There will be fewer turkeys on the market, but demand is expected to be higher, particularly for smaller birds and for more carefully raised and processed turkeys.

Kroger executives are anticipating more of what marketers call the “premiumization” of Thanksgiving ingredients, with many cooks shopping for turkeys that are fresh, organic, free-range or processed in ways that elevate them beyond an inexpensive frozen bird.

“Customers aren’t necessarily going out to restaurants, so they are upping their game in terms of products,” said Stuart Aitken, the company’s chief merchant.

Still, plenty of households will be looking for bargain turkeys and trying to stretch their food budget.

“I can buy that this will be the most expensive Thanksgiving ever, but there’s an income-inequality story here that matters a lot,” said Trey Malone, an agricultural economist at Michigan State University. “The rich are going to be spending more on Thanksgiving than they have ever spent before, but not everyone is going to be able to do that.”

Packaged dinner rolls will be pricier because the cost of almost all of the ingredients that commercial bakers use has gone up. Canned cranberry sauce will cost more because domestic steel plants have yet to catch up after pandemic shutdowns, and China is limiting steel production to reduce carbon emissions. As a result, steel prices have remained more than 200% higher than they were before the pandemic.

The heftier price tag on that turkey-friendly California pinot noir reflects a 25% surge in energy costs, expensive delays related to labor shortages and the cost of glass bottles stuck on cargo ships coming from China. The average end-to-end shipping time from China to the United States was 73 days in September, up from 40 days two years earlier, said Katheryn Russ, a professor of economics at the University of California at Davis. And shipping expenses, she said, have tripled.

“All of these dynamics are not theoretical,” Russ said. “We can’t lose sight of how these broader issues hit home.”

Extreme weather has made Thanksgiving ingredients cost more, too. A late-spring drought in the Midwest damaged the sugar beet crop, which had already been hurt by freezing weather in 2019. Hurricane Ida shut cane-sugar refineries in the South. Grape, nut and citrus crops in California have suffered under this year’s drought. Brazil, which supplies the world with more coffee than any other country, has endured severe drought and then a surprise July frost, resulting in less coffee and higher prices.

	<p>Even the basic materials — like wooden pallets and cardboard containers — that farmers need to get their crops from the field to distributors are either hard to find or much more expensive.</p> <p>“Everything you go to order, either you can’t get it, or you shake your head and go, ‘How much?’ ” said Jim Kent, an owner of the 100-acre Locust Grove Fruit Farm in Milton, New York.</p> <p>Although grocery-store executives predict spot shortages on some items, economists like Russ say there is no indication the panic-buying that was a hallmark of pandemic shopping in 2020 will resurface.</p> <p>That’s not reassuring to some home cooks, who are worried about not being able to find smaller turkeys, canned pumpkin or the particular kind of stuffing mix they like.</p> <p>Hoffman, a Chicago resident who works in public relations and blogs about food, recently had a difficult time finding cream of tartar and mini marshmallows. “Even finding cans of pumpkin has been honestly difficult,” she said, “so as I see them, I grab a few.”</p> <p>As food prices continue to climb, she has to budget more and search out bargains. That’s not always easy when the holidays demand specific ingredients.</p> <p>“I dread buying vanilla,” she said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 New US Fire Administrator
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/emergency-preparedness/dr-lori-moore-merrell-sworn-in-as-new-u-s-fire-administrator/
GIST	<p>Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell, a longtime advocate for the fire service and president and CEO of the International Public Safety Data Institute, was selected by President Biden to fill the vacant role leading the U.S. Fire Administration.</p> <p>The USFA has been without an administrator since January, when former Oklahoma City Fire Chief Keith Bryant, who had served as administrator since 2017, left and Deputy Fire Administrator Tonya Hoover filled the role in an acting capacity.</p> <p>FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell swore in Moore-Merrell on Monday.</p> <p>“The USFA’s work is extremely important — working with state and local fire and EMS departments and emergency responders throughout the country, we must do better to prepare for the changing landscape of what we refer to as all hazards,” said Moore-Merrell.</p> <p>“With ever-increasing incidence of wildland fire and other disasters, we must redouble our efforts to prevent ignition and harden the wildland urban interface. It’s an honor to be selected for this position,” she said. “I’m looking forward to working alongside and leading our workforce and am grateful for this opportunity and eager to further drive the mission of USFA.”</p> <p>Moore-Merrell began her career in the fire service in 1987 as a firefighter-paramedic with the Memphis Fire Department. Beginning in 1993, Moore-Merrell worked at the International Association of Fire Fighters for more than 25 years, driving data to agencies to make fact-based decisions as chief executive of the Technical Research/Data Analytics division. She left the IAFF to co-found the IPSD in 2019.</p> <p>She was awarded honorary membership in the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association in 2019, and served nine years as a Commissioner to the Commission for Fire Service Accreditation (CFAI) and three terms as a board member for the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE). She is a member of the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) Executive Board, and served four terms on the Commonwealth of Virginia EMS Advisory Board.</p>

	<p>Moore-Merrell received Homeland Security Today's Mission Award in 2020 for her work paving the way on educating agencies on the use of data to plan for emergency incidents and implementing data-driven decisions in real time at emergency scenes.</p> <p>She served on the Biden-Harris Transition Team to conduct an agency review for DHS/FEMA as part of the COVID-19 response planning. She also served on the Public Safety Committee of the Transition Teams for both the Mayor of New York City in 2013 and the District of Columbia Mayor in 2015.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Enforcement vaccine mandates uneven
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/enforcement-of-indoor-vaccine-mandates-proves-uneven-in-us/
GIST	<p>HONOLULU (AP) — Go out for a night on the town in some U.S. cities and you might find yourself waiting while someone at the door of the restaurant or theater closely inspects your vaccination card and checks it against your photo ID. Or, conversely, you might be waved right through just by flashing your card.</p> <p>How rigorously vaccination requirements are being enforced varies from place to place, even within the same state or city.</p> <p>Proof of vaccination is required in several American cities to get into restaurants and bars, enjoy a concert or a play, catch a movie or go to a ballgame.</p> <p>Ticket agents dutifully ascertain the vaccination status of everyone passing through the turnstile at pro sports venues in some cities from Seattle and New York, and restaurant hosts do the same in many places. In other locations, vaccine checks are cursory at best. Sometimes it's practically done on the honor system.</p> <p>"There are some businesses that say they check for vaccination proof, but they are not even checking," said Jay Matsler, of Palm Springs, California, who was visiting San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf with his partner during a stop of their cruise along the California coast.</p> <p>"We actually tell them, 'I'm sorry, you're not enforcing this. We're not going to give you our business,'" Matsler said. He said they were recently in Prague and Paris and had to show their vaccination cards and IDs at every indoor space they visited.</p> <p>Some places around the U.S. are afraid of losing business if they insist on proof. Some say they don't have enough staff to conduct such checks amid a nationwide labor shortage. Some object on principle.</p> <p>And some don't want to risk ugly confrontations. At an Italian restaurant in New York City, a request that a group of customers show vaccination proof led to a brawl.</p> <p>During the first month enforcement in New York, inspectors issued warnings to 6,000 businesses for not checking patrons' status, and 15 were fined \$1,000 for being repeat offenders. The indoor dining area at an In-N-Out Burger joint in San Francisco was shut down this month by health authorities for not demanding proof of vaccination.</p> <p>Public health authorities see the requirements as vital tools in slowing COVID-19 at a time when 1,500 or more Americans are dying each day from the virus. Such rules face deep opposition in conservative states, meaning they are mainly in effect in Democratic-run locations.</p> <p>At the Highway Inn restaurant in Honolulu on Monday, the hostess asked diners for proof of vaccination or a negative test before seating them indoors. The information on their cards must match their IDs, and they must also give contact information that the restaurant keeps on record for two weeks in case of an outbreak.</p>

Russell Ryan, the restaurant's co-owner, said business declined when the vaccine requirement for restaurants first went into effect in mid-September. A few unvaccinated people "stormed off in a huff," he said, but most have complied, and business has returned as more people have gotten vaccinated.

"Generally, it has been less confrontational than we feared," Ryan said. "We thought that we'd get some zealots who want to make a stand for whatever reason."

In many places in the U.S., precisely how to enforce the vaccination rule is left up to businesses.

At a movie theater on a recent night in San Francisco, teenagers at the concession stand glanced at patrons' cellphone photos of their vaccination cards before handing them their popcorn, candy and drinks.

At the city's Opera House, however, an usher closely examines the proof of vaccination and compares it against a picture ID. Anyone who fails to show proof will be asked to leave.

San Francisco health inspectors checking on the food permits of restaurants also routinely look to see whether businesses are complying with the proof-of-vaccination rules, but the city relies largely on complaints of violations phoned in to its 311 line.

Since the city's mandate went into effect on Aug. 20, only one restaurant has been penalized — the In-N-Out at Fisherman's Wharf that was closed for the day on Oct. 14 after refusing to ask for proof of vaccination despite several warnings from the city. The burger place now serves only takeout. A spokesman said the company refuses to be "the vaccination police for any government."

In Los Angeles County, health inspectors found 38 venues that needed more training on vaccine rules out of about 250 bars, lounges, nightclubs, breweries, wineries and distilleries checked between Oct. 8 and Oct. 17. When the county visited 78 bars the next week, they found about 15% of them weren't in compliance with customer vaccine verification rules, triggering more training.

New Orleans is also among the big cities that have imposed such rules, and Los Angeles plans to roll out its own requirements next week.

In New York City, big venues, like Broadway theaters and museums, tend to enforce the rules strictly. A neighborhood cafe might not.

"The vast, vast, vast majority of restaurants and all the other businesses are saying, 'Yes, we're going to work with this. We're going to make it work for our employees, for our customers, keep everyone safe,'" Mayor Bill de Blasio said.

Rick Camac, dean of restaurant and hospitality management at the Institute of Culinary Education in New York, said some of the regulations are ambiguous about how restaurants should work, so some establishments differ on the details, such as whether they require paper or electronic cards. Enforcement is also tough for workers who are trained in hospitality and may not be equipped to handle angry customers, he said.

"They don't want to play police officer," he said. "They want to guide you to your table and have that be the starting point for a great experience."

Some business owners around the U.S. have opted to close their dining rooms and offer only takeout or outdoor seating.

In Honolulu, hostess Ku'uipo Lorenzo greeted customers Ashley and Martin Day as they arrived at the Highway Inn for authentic Hawaiian food. They were seated at a table after Ashley produced her vaccine card and her unvaccinated husband showed a recent negative COVID-19 test.

	<p>“We have different perspectives,” Ashley Day said. “I think we both agree that it should probably be a testing mandate rather than a vaccine mandate.”</p> <p>But the Days look forward to when tests and vaccines aren’t needed to dine out.</p> <p>“I think we’d like to see things open up again,” said Ashley.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Ports backlog: stubborn supply chain woes
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/10/26/supply-chain-ports-fees-biden/
GIST	<p>A deepening freight logjam is defying President Biden's hopes of restoring normal cargo movements, hampering the economic recovery and threatening consumers’ holiday shopping plans.</p> <p>Two weeks after Biden administration officials announced steps toward round-the-clock operations at the nation’s chief port complex, the backlog of ships anchored off the coast of Southern California has only grown larger. There is little sign that truckers are taking advantage of terminals’ extended hours to move containers off the crowded docks.</p> <p>At APM Terminals’ Pier 400 in Long Beach, Calif., the largest such privately owned facility in North America, nearly half of the 2,000 available appointments for truckers went unused Friday, according to Maersk, which owns the site.</p> <p>As complaints mount from affected shippers, administration officials are pressing ports, terminals and truckers to rethink their operations. On Monday, the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach said they would impose new daily fees on cargo carriers in a bid to clear the docks and make room for containers stuck on ships offshore.</p> <p>Starting Monday, the ports will bill carriers \$100 per day for each container that remains on the dock for more than three days, if slated to move by rail, or nine days for truck-bound cargo. Those per-container fees will increase in \$100 increments for each day of additional delay, the ports said.</p> <p>John Porcari, the administration’s port envoy, who helped develop the initiative, said it would reduce port congestion. But some retailers fear they will get stuck with the tab.</p> <p>The “decision to apply new surcharges does not resolve our ever-worsening supply chain crisis and we fear carriers will see this as another opportunity to stick shippers with the bill on top of already massive freight costs,” said Stephen Lamar, president of the American Apparel and Footwear Association.</p> <p>The new surcharges come just days after city officials in Long Beach — responding to what they called a “national emergency” — relaxed regulations limiting the height of stacked shipping containers. For the next 90 days, warehouses and industrial sites in the city will be allowed to stack containers four high, twice the normal limit, to provide an outlet for cargo stuck on the docks. (The shift does not affect port terminals, which already pile the rectangular metal boxes six high.)</p> <p>Chronic port crowding shows that pandemic-related shifts in Americans’ spending habits have overwhelmed the nation’s supply lines. Consumers are spending less today on services like airline travel and restaurant meals than they did in early 2020. But they are purchasing about 15 percent more goods like furniture and computers, with many of those products traveling from Asia through the Southern California ports.</p> <p>More than 30 million tons of cargo now rests aboard vessels idling outside U.S. ports, economists at Goldman Sachs said Tuesday. The investment bank said port congestion will not ease until the second half of next year.</p>

The gridlock is contributing to [inflation](#) that is lasting longer than the Federal Reserve expected while denting corporate profits, despite accelerating economic growth.

Consumer and industrial companies alike have cited supply chain headaches in recent earnings calls.

Lennox International, a maker of heating and cooling systems, told investors this week that supply chain disruptions and covid impacts shaved \$25 million off its third-quarter operating profit and would have a similar impact over the remainder of the year. The company is struggling with shortages of computer chips as well as wooden pallets and corrugated cardboard.

Likewise, supply snags including labor shortages are preventing Kimberly-Clark, a manufacturer of sanitary paper products, from filling all its orders, Maria Henry, the company's chief financial officer, said on an investor call this week. "I don't see a near-term catalyst for them improving," she said of the holdups.

[The White House](#) is keenly aware that fallout from supply woes that Biden calls "significant" has become a political liability — and officials are struggling to identify solutions for largely private-sector problems.

In a recent CNN town hall, the president said he "absolutely, positively" would consider using National Guard units to alleviate cargo backlogs, a move that few logistics experts expect to happen.

Porcari last month facilitated a decision by the neighboring Southern California ports to extend their hours, with some terminals operating [around-the-clock](#) at least a few days each week.

But the initial results have been disappointing. The 77 container ships anchored in Southern California's San Pedro Bay on Tuesday exceed the 56 that were there when Biden announced the longer hours.

Truckers have been reluctant to take advantage of the late-night and predawn appointments for collecting containers, either because they lack the necessary chassis to hold the cargo or their customers' warehouses are full.

"Operational details still need to be worked out on 24/7 operations at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. This level of operations is not an overnight, simple solution to implement — and does not solve the broader supply chain capacity challenges and shortage of workers in trucking, warehouse and supply chain jobs," Narin Phol, Maersk North America regional managing director, told an industry conference in South Carolina on Monday.

The new surcharges, which the L.A. and Long Beach ports announced late Monday, were developed with Porcari, the administration's ports specialist. The fees will be spent on investments to boost capacity and ease bottlenecks, the ports said.

Some industry executives, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss confidential conversations, said the fees could prompt carriers to deploy "sweeper ships" to collect thousands of empty containers clogging the docks or to secure additional storage space inland. Administration officials in recent months scoured Southern California for unused government land without success.

Carriers are regarded as having the deepest pockets in the supply chain. The seven largest publicly traded shipping lines — including Maersk, Cosco and Hapag-Lloyd — reported more than \$23 billion in profits in the first half of this year, compared with \$1 billion in the same period in 2020.

But Matt Schrap, CEO of the Harbor Trucking Association, whose members service the ports, said the new fees would do nothing about the "tens of thousands of containers" sitting empty on chassis, either at the port or at area warehouses that are too full to unload them.

Until those chassis can be unloaded and returned to the port to collect fresh loads, the backlog will linger, he said.

	<p>The National Retail Federation, representing companies such as Walmart, Target and Macy's, also said the new surcharges are insufficient. "Key issues such as chassis availability and empty container returns still need to be addressed. We encourage ocean carriers to continue to work with importers and truckers to move cargo as quickly as possible and not just pass along the cost of the fee, which will further exacerbate the problems," the industry group said.</p> <p>The new fees threaten to intensify complaints from retailers and other shippers over fines they pay for not quickly collecting their containers from the docks. This summer, the Federal Maritime Commission said it would audit these "demurrage" billings by the top nine ocean carriers, following complaints from shippers about exorbitant charges.</p> <p>Demurrage charges are intended to encourage shippers to collect their containers in a timely fashion, freeing up space needed to make vessel loading and unloading more efficient. But with supply lines jammed, many shippers say they lack the equipment or storage space needed before they can pick up their goods.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Immigration arrests lowest level in decade
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/ice-arrests-biden-trump/2021/10/25/f33130b8-35b5-11ec-9a5d-93a89c74e76d_story.html
GIST	<p>Immigration arrests in the interior of the United States fell in fiscal 2021 to the lowest level in more than a decade — roughly half the annual totals recorded during the Trump administration, according to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement data obtained by The Washington Post.</p> <p>ICE arrests in the interior plunged after President Biden took office and set new limits on immigration enforcement, including a 100-day "pause" on most deportations. A federal judge quickly blocked that order, and ICE's arrests increased somewhat in recent months.</p> <p>But enforcement levels under Biden's new priority system remain relatively low. Officers working for ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) made about 72,000 administrative arrests during the fiscal year that ended in September, according to agency data, down from 104,000 during fiscal 2020 and an average of 148,000 annually from 2017 through 2019.</p> <p>ERO administrative arrest data is considered one of the best gauges of ICE activity because interior enforcement is entirely under the agency's control, unlike deportations and other metrics that rise and fall with migration trends at the Mexican border.</p> <p>Curbing civil immigration arrests within the United States allows the Biden administration to shield millions of longtime undocumented immigrants from deportation to Mexico and other countries, even as congressional Democrats struggle to deliver on the president's goal of granting those immigrants a path to citizenship this year.</p> <p>But Biden is still facing criticism from many corners: Texas and Louisiana are battling in federal court to compel the government to arrest more undocumented immigrants, while left-leaning advocates are angry with the administration for continuing to expel newer migrants attempting to cross the Southwest border.</p> <p>During the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, ERO's 6,000 enforcement officers each averaged about 12 immigration arrests per year, or one per month. The peak of ICE enforcement activity during the past decade was fiscal 2011, when ICE made 322,093 administrative arrests, about 4½ times the 2021 total, historical data shows.</p> <p>Asked for comment on the data, ICE spokeswoman Paige Hughes said the agency "is in the process of finalizing our year-end fiscal numbers, and these numbers will be shared publicly when the review is complete. Data integrity is of the utmost importance to the agency, and ICE's vetted statistics powerfully</p>

demonstrate the effectiveness of our current approach of prioritizing national security, border security, and public safety.”

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas issued broad new directives to ICE in late September, saying the fact that someone is present in the United States illegally “should not alone be the basis” of a decision to detain and deport them.

But the agency had shifted away from the priorities of the previous administration as soon as Biden took office, directing officers to prioritize recent border crossers and threats to national security and public safety.

Under President Donald Trump, ICE officers had broad latitude to enforce immigration laws and make arrests, and many of those who were categorized as “criminal” suspects were nonviolent offenders or had convictions for immigration violations such as illegally reentering the country.

During fiscal 2020, about 90 percent of those taken into custody by ICE officers had some type of criminal conviction or pending criminal charges, according to agency data. That share fell to 65 percent during fiscal 2021. (The remaining one-third were “immigration violators,” the data shows.)

ICE officials say the number of serious criminals being arrested has increased, however. Between Feb. 18 and Aug. 31, officials said, ICE arrested 6,046 individuals with aggravated felony convictions, compared with 3,575 in the same period in 2020.

The agency also pointed to the arrest of 363 sex offenders during a targeted operation this summer, compared with 194 during that period the previous year. Nearly 80 percent of these offenses involved child victims, ICE said.

Mayorkas’s new ICE [guidelines](#) instruct officers to continue to prioritize immigrants who pose a threat to national security and public safety, as well as recent border-crossers who entered the United States illegally.

“Are we going to spend the time apprehending and removing the farmworker who is breaking his or her back to pick fruit that we all put on our tables?” Mayorkas told The Post in a September [interview](#). “Because if we pursue that individual, we will not be spending those same resources on somebody who does, in fact, threaten our safety. And that is what this is about.”

Mayorkas gave ICE officers wider discretion to determine whether to arrest someone, easing interim guidelines issued in February that required senior supervisors to sign off on street-level enforcement decisions.

GOP state attorneys general in Texas and Louisiana are attempting to stop the new enforcement priorities from taking effect, arguing in a federal lawsuit that ICE is even failing to take custody of some criminals.

“There is simply no way for ICE to so significantly reduce its initial book-ins without allowing many dangerous criminal aliens at large in American communities,” the states said in a court filing late last week. The Biden administration’s “failure to detain criminal aliens is imposing significant costs on plaintiffs and their citizens.”

The Department of Homeland Security [said](#) this month that the agency would [discontinue mass roundups at worksites](#) and more aggressively target unscrupulous employers who exploit unauthorized immigrants.

Jessica Vaughan, director of policy studies at the Center for Immigration Studies, which favors reducing immigration, accused ICE of a “collapse in interior enforcement,” even as the agency continues to receive billions of dollars for detention and deportations.

“This is a public safety problem that we don’t need to have,” she said, adding that one officer told her “the hardest part of my job now is pretending to look busy.”

At the U.S.-Mexico border, illegal crossings have soared since Biden took office; the 1.7 million migrants apprehended by the Border Patrol during the 2021 fiscal year [was an all-time high](#). Critics of the Biden administration say lax interior enforcement has incentivized illegal entries.

ICE curbed some interior enforcement activity in 2020 to avoid the spread of the [coronavirus](#) inside immigration jails. In the months that followed, the detainee population dropped to the lowest levels in more than a decade. The current detainee population is about 22,000, according to the most recent agency statistics, well below the peak of more than 56,000 during the Trump administration.

The Biden administration is also facing a backlash from immigrant advocacy groups. They are angry over the mass expulsion of Haitian migrants last month from a makeshift camp in Del Rio, Tex., as well as plans to [restart](#) the Trump-era “Remain in Mexico” policy in November, which a federal court has ordered.

Activists protested by staging a virtual “walkout” from a meeting with top Biden immigration advisers this month, with many saying his enforcement approach is no different than his predecessor’s.

And while advocates for immigrants say they are encouraged by the shift in interior enforcement, they are unsure how DHS will monitor ICE’s compliance with the [priorities](#) taking effect next month.

Maru Mora Villalpando, a 50-year-old Mexican national living in Washington state, said the new policies marked “a major victory” for grass-roots immigration organizations that have been fighting to limit arrests.

She said the Trump administration targeted her for deportation after she publicized detainee protests in her state, though she had no criminal record and her daughter is a U.S. citizen. She said she overstayed a visa and has lived here since 1996.

The Biden administration, in contrast, exercised its prosecutorial discretion to set aside her case this year, clearing the way for her daughter to sponsor her for legal residency, she said. A few days ago, she said, her green card arrived.

“I’m one of the lucky ones,” said Mora Villalpando, who plans to return home to Mexico soon to visit siblings she hasn’t seen in 25 years; her parents have already died.

“This doesn’t end with me having a green card,” she added. “. . . The work will be done when ICE is no more.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 NTSB report Amtrak Montana derailment
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2021/10/26/ntsb-amtrak-derailment-cause/
GIST	<p>An automatic braking system that can prevent derailments was enabled and operating when an Amtrak train left the tracks in rural Montana last month, according to a preliminary report Tuesday on the incident that killed three people and injured dozens more.</p> <p>The report from the National Transportation Safety Board, which is investigating the Sept. 25 derailment, said the system, known as positive train control (PTC), that is designed to take human error out of operating a train was running, although it makes no conclusion on whether that system would have prevented the train from leaving the tracks.</p> <p>The NTSB report also offers no clues on what could have caused the Empire Builder train traveling from Chicago to Seattle to derail. Eight of the 10 train cars — with 154 people onboard — went off the tracks about 4 p.m. local time near Joplin, about 200 miles north of Helena, Mont.</p>

The NTSB said last month the train was traveling at 75 mph to 78 mph — below the speed limit of 79 mph — when it derailed, and gave no initial indication of a cause, saying investigators were not ruling anything out. From the beginning, NTSB investigators said they were paying special attention to maintenance issues while trying to determine if passengers may have been ejected on impact, but the report makes no mention of those issues.

The incident occurred less than four years after an Amtrak derailment in Washington state, where investigators said the lack of an automatic braking system allowed the engineer to enter a 30 mph curve too quickly. That crash killed three passengers and injured 65 others.

Experts have said it is less likely in this case that human error was a factor because that stretch of track and the train are equipped with PTC. The system automatically applies the brakes if a train is exceeding speed limits and can prevent a train from going down the wrong track if a switch is left in the wrong position. U.S. railroads rolled out the system at the end of last year, in what has been touted as one of the most consequential investments in rail safety technology.

Neither Amtrak nor the railroad owner, BNSF Railway, had said previously whether PTC was properly working at the time of the crash.

Tuesday's report offers few other details about the incident. According to the NTSB, 44 people were injured and the crash caused more than \$22 million in damage.

Eight cars derailed, four of which falling on their sides, in an area where BNSF Railway controls train traffic. The locomotives and the first two rail cars remained on the rail, the report said. The weather was clear with no precipitation at the time.

Amtrak on Tuesday said it is working with federal investigators but declined to comment further because it is a party in the NTSB investigation. BNSF also said it is collaborating with the NTSB investigation.

"We look forward to reviewing the final report and any recommendations from the Board," Amtrak said in a statement.

NTSB officials said investigators are working to piece together what happened. They reviewed signal and train control data logs, video footage from the train and black-box data while also analyzing damage to rail cars and injuries to survivors and those who died, officials said.

Investigators interviewed crew members on the Amtrak train and on a freight train that passed through the area 80 minutes earlier.

NTSB spokesman Eric Weiss said investigators are still analyzing evidence in the lab, saying they are in the "fact-finding phase." He said the board is likely to release an update in the coming months, ahead of a final report, which can take up to a year and typically comes with recommendations for the railroad or the federal oversight agency for how to prevent similar incidents.

The report comes as new allegations have emerged about the incident in multiple lawsuits filed against Amtrak and BNSF. Multiple filings allege negligence on the part of the passenger rail service and the railroad, including for "improper, inadequate and insufficient rail maintenance, switches and train equipment."

Passenger Justin Ruddell, 40, an Oregon truck driver, said he was in a restroom behind the observation car when the train derailed, suffering two broken vertebrae and five broken ribs. A lawsuit on his behalf describes a horrific scene in which the force of the derailment caused the outside door to peel open, exposing him to gravel and dirt, with feces and urine pouring over him as he tried to dig himself out with a railroad spike.

“I thought I was going to die,” he said in a news conference earlier this month.

A lawsuit filed on behalf of Rebecca Schneider, who was traveling with her husband, Zach, 28, to Portland, Ore., when the train derailed, speculated about a possible problem with tracks from heat-induced buckling, which can result after years of extreme temperature swings. Zach Schneider, a software engineer from Fairview Heights, Ill., was killed in the crash.

The two other victims killed were Marjorie Varnadoe, 72, and Donald Varnadoe, 74, of St. Simons Island, Ga.

BNSF spokeswoman Lena Kent on Tuesday declined to comment on the lawsuits, saying in an email that the company does not comment on pending litigation. Amtrak also declined to comment.

Kristofer S. Riddle, an attorney with Chicago-based Clifford Law Offices, said passengers who were injured in the derailment were looking to the NTSB findings for answers about what led to the incident. But he said the report is only a piece of what is likely to be a lengthy legal investigation.

He said whatever the cause of the derailment, it was “absolutely preventable and consequently, there need to be effective policies and procedures in place so something like this never happens again.”

Clifford Law has been hired by 24 passengers injured in the crash, and has filed 11 lawsuits in federal court in Chicago. The filings claim negligence on the part of the Amtrak and BNSF.

The Empire Builder route connects Chicago and Seattle and is a popular route for vacationers because of the scenery it traverses, including views of the Mississippi River, the skylines of Minneapolis and St. Paul, the Gassman Coulee Trestle and Glacier National Park. It is also a lifeline for many in the Upper Great Plains who live in rural areas not easily accessible by plane.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Back to school: guns, fights, acting out
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/10/26/schools-violence-teachers-guns-fights/
GIST	<p>A Pennsylvania high school reverted to virtual classes last week, but it wasn't because of coronavirus fears. It was because of “credible threats” after student fights.</p> <p>In a Waldorf, Md., high school, a school resource officer was assaulted as three separate fights unfolded in the hallways and one spilled into the student parking lot. And in a large fight at a high school outside Columbus, Ohio, nine teachers were injured and seven students were charged with aggravated riot.</p> <p>Much of the attention around the return to school after months of remote learning has focused on academic losses, but educators also feared emotional damage and behavioral unrest as students who have seen their lives upended by the pandemic adjust to being in school buildings again.</p> <p>Those fears now appear to be materializing, in big ways and small. The National Association of School Resource Officers reports that from Aug. 1 to Oct. 1 this year, there were 97 reported gun-related incidents in schools. During the same span in 2019, there were 29.</p> <p>Similarly, Everytown for Gun Safety, a lobby group for gun restrictions, tallies 56 instances of gunfire on school grounds in August and September of 2021. That is higher for those two months than any year since the group began tracking incidents in 2013, and more than double the previous high of 22 in 2019. It also found record numbers of deaths, at eight, and injuries, with 35.</p> <p>“School violence has risen to levels that we haven’t seen quite frankly,” said Mo Canady, executive director of the National Association of School Resource Officers. “I don’t think it took a genius to see this coming.”</p>

There is no national data on less-serious instances of violence in schools, but teachers and school administrators across the country say they are seeing a rise in everything from minor misbehaviors to fighting in the hallways. There's even a disturbing [TikTok challenge](#) that [urges teens](#) to record themselves slapping a teacher.

"The toxic stress of everything going on during the pandemic, it's building up with kids — and adults. Now that they're around each other again, they need to relearn how to do school again," said Christina Conolly, director of Psychological Services for Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland, who recently chaired the School Safety and Crisis Response Committee of the National Association of School Psychologists.

Stress levels are also high among adults when it comes to schools, with loud fights over whether masks should be mandatory and over how to teach about race in schools. Some school board members have been shouted down and even threatened by parents angry over school policies.

More worrisome for students, experts say, is the social isolation wrought by the pandemic. Isolation is among the risk factors for students who commit violent acts in schools, the Department of Homeland Security warned in a [May bulletin](#). The agency noted that the pandemic also denied many students access to mental health professionals and put financial strains on many families.

"The reduced access to services coupled with the exposure to additional risk factors suggests schools — and the communities in which they are located — will need to increase support services to help students adjust to in-person learning as they cope with the potential trauma associated with the pandemic response," the Homeland Security bulletin said.

Anecdotally, teachers and even some students say the level of disturbance this fall has gone far beyond years past. In some cases, students are unaccustomed to following the rules that govern a school building. They don't grasp the expectations for their ages, teachers say, because the last time some were in school was two grades ago.

Dawn Neely-Randall, a fifth-grade teacher in Elyria, Ohio, has taught for more than 30 years and said she has never seen "so much defiance" from students, including children pushing each other and lobbing verbal attacks.

"I'm not just talking about immature behaviors," she said. "On the first day of school, when students are usually on their best behavior, they came roaring in, jumping onto and over the furniture."

She said she has managed to get her classes under control but she has to be stricter than usual, and was pushed to seek anti-anxiety medication for the first time in her life and has begun contemplating early retirement.

"Hardest year in 32 years of teaching," she wrote in a Facebook post. "I know I'm not alone. It's being felt all across the nation."

Leo Cavinder, 17, sees it too, at La Porte High School in La Porte, Ind.

"I have seen and heard a lot more violence ... than in previous years," he said. "There have been fights break out that result in blood on the floor and lockers and broken or bruised faces."

He blames the extended period of remote school, where students didn't have to deal with peers. "Students are adjusting back to normal," he said.

At Westlake High School in Waldorf, Md., the principal wrote families this month about [multiple fights](#) in a single day. The first was after lunch in the hallway, then came a second after sixth period, outside the library. As the halls were being cleared, another fight was unfolding upstairs that resulted in a physical assault on a school resource officer.

Then, as school dismissed, a fourth altercation occurred in the student parking lot.

“Please talk with your child about using supports in place at school, and consequences for behavior that violates school policies and rules,” Principal Diane Roberts wrote.

In Lysa Mullady’s elementary school in Suffolk County on Long Island, the behavior problems are small things: “No one can get along on the playground.”

“The remote-learning kids who are coming back into the classroom have forgotten what it’s like to be with other children,” she said. “There’s a skill set that you need to problem-solve.” Those skills include talking it out and walking away, she said. “They haven’t had to navigate outside their homes for so long they’ve really forgotten how to do it.”

Mullady, vice president for elementary for the New York State School Counselor Association, said she advises teachers to go over difficult moments with the whole class, so everyone can learn how to better solve problems. Schools need to examine data and teachers need to consult with each other to identify students who are having trouble. And, she said, teachers need to take time to check in and connect with individual children.

“It’s relationship building, it’s creating safe spaces so you build a relationship by really seeing each child,” she said. “Teachers are feeling the stress of the gap they have to make up academically, but we cannot make up any gap until a child is emotionally ready to learn.”

[At a recent meeting of the school board](#) in the Addison Central School District in Vermont, Fawnda Buttolph said she has never seen such poor student behavior in some 20 years of teaching. This fall, she has worked as a substitute in four district schools.

“The kids are in charge and they know it,” she said during a long speech in which she broke into tears. She described disrespectful students refusing to do classwork and “chaotic” hallways.

One day a student threw a bag of grapes into her classroom, making a mess that he refused to clean up. Students in one of her classrooms were so “out of control” and disrespectful that she had to call in the principal, who came with the assistant principal and removed four students. “For the first time ever, I raised my voice and yelled at my students. I’ve never done that,” she said.

In Farmington, N.M., [two high school students were arrested](#) for planning a school shooting, after officials found a map and written plans. Separately, Superintendent Gene Schmidt said there was some damage done to a couple of school bathrooms, the result of another TikTok challenge. Other than that, though, he says students have mostly been excited to be back in school.

“After kids had been out of school for so long, when they first came back we had, if anything, less behavioral problems than before because they just wanted to be back in school,” he said.

Other educators say the year began on a joyful note but behavior problems emerged after students were back for a bit.

At Woodland Hills High School outside Pittsburgh, the district [shifted to remote schooling](#) for two days in hopes of calming things down after fights rolled through the school last week.

It began with two girls fighting at lunch, said Superintendent James Harris. Later that day, two boys fought over a girl, prompting friends to jump in. By the time it was over, 30 students had attacked other students, he said.

“That adrenaline just started flowing through them and they couldn’t control it,” Harris said.

Harris said he is not excusing the behavior, but has little doubt the mayhem can be traced to students needing to relearn how to be in school after so many months away from it.

“The freshmen were seventh-graders last time they were in school,” he said. “They went from recess and cartwheels to ‘what do you want to be when you grow up?’ and ‘where do you want to go to college?’ Their bodies have grown but their minds haven’t. They’re still seeing themselves as young students who want recess, who want to play.”

At the same time, many students have lost loved ones in the pandemic, and there have been recent shootings in the area, leaving students with added trauma.

“A lot of it comes down to socialization, expectations and I think deep down inside there’s a lot of sadness from the trauma that students experienced,” Harris said.

He decided to move to remote school last Thursday and Friday after administrators picked up comments on social media threatening to continue the fight. After two days of remote learning, he said, Friday night’s football game and Saturday’s homecoming dance went on as scheduled and unfolded without any trouble.

Harris said the two-day break was made possible by technology bought for remote school during the pandemic. He had imagined the schools might also use it on snow days, or for a student who was out of town.

“It’s a tool that we have at our disposal,” he said. “We never thought we [would have to] shut down the school because of kids fighting.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Women in state policing remains low
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2021/10/number-women-state-policing-remains-low
GIST	<p>For two decades, amid the rise of women to governor’s mansions, military leadership and even the vice presidency, the percentage of women among the ranks of state police officers has hardly budged. A Stateline analysis finds that nationally, just 7% of sworn state troopers are female.</p> <p>That’s a tiny gain from 2000, when the average female makeup of state police troopers was 6%, according to a 50-state census by the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics.</p> <p>Overall, women make up less than 13% of full-time police officers in the United States.</p> <p>As a national reckoning over law enforcement practices unfolds, research shows that women are less likely to use force, are named in fewer complaints and get better outcomes for some victims. Some state agencies are looking to recruit more women to change not only who is doing the policing, but also how their departments police.</p> <p>“Over the past year I’ve seen a call for a different type of policing. We’ve seen a call for more communication, more empathy,” said Nikki Smith-Kea, an expert on gender equity in policing currently doing a fellowship with the Philadelphia Police Department. “As a profession, are we willing to recognize that having a difference in how we look might have a difference in how we operate?”</p> <p>Policing experts attribute the low percentage of women overall to reasons that include stereotypes about the profession, the demands of training, patterns of sexism and harassment, and the perpetual lack of women to serve as mentors.</p> <p>All states, except Hawaii, have a state policing force, often classified as a highway patrol. In some states, the department is primarily responsible for traffic stops. In others, the agencies also handle criminal cases from all over the state or provide backup to local agencies.</p>

Stateline contacted every state policing agency; all but five provided demographic information. The Bureau of Justice Statistics is conducting another nationwide review of gender breakdown among state agencies, but the data might not be available for a couple of years, according to spokesperson Tannyr Watkins.

The data for Washington state showed that in 2000, 7% of sworn Washington state troopers were women, but that number had grown to 10% by 2021. Nationally, just 7% of sworn state troopers today are women, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. That number is a slight uptick from 2000, when the average female makeup of state police departments was 6%.

“Those are sobering numbers,” said Maureen McGough, the chief of staff of New York University’s School of Law’s Policing Project and a former senior policy adviser in the National Institute of Justice, which this year helped launch a national campaign to recruit more women in policing.

“We’ve known historically that state police agencies have fewer women,” McGough said. “I am surprised to see that the numbers haven’t increased all that much since the last census.”

Meanwhile, most agencies say they want to hire women and have long tried. Although a few told Stateline they don’t have recruiting efforts targeted at women, many more said they are making changes to bring more women on board.

“To better reflect the communities we serve, we need to continue hiring and retaining a diverse membership,” said Vermont State Police Capt. Julie Scribner in an interview.

“Women, troopers of color, LGBTQ troopers — that’s the makeup of our communities,” Scribner said. “The makeup of our department is probably 85% straight, white men. That’s not the makeup of the population of Vermont.”

The benefits

Until recently, the women who worked for the North Dakota Highway Patrol had to follow a few rules: Hair had to be in a bun. No fingernail polish allowed.

Those rules have been loosened to try to add women to the current count: seven of 158 troopers.

One of those women is Sgt. Jenna Clawson Huibregtse. This year, she became the second woman in the agency to be promoted above trooper. Now the 32-year-old is helping lead the charge to bring more women to the ranks.

“Some of the issues we see in law enforcement right now, I think women can help change a lot of that,” Clawson Huibregtse said in a recent interview.

Around 2014, she finished her master’s degree in cultural anthropology and was thinking about joining the military.

“There was a rise in headlines and issues between minority groups and police. And I took issue with that,” Clawson Huibregtse said. “I decided, ‘Well, I think I’m capable of becoming a cop. I want to fix that issue from the inside out.’ ”

"Are we willing to recognize that having a difference in how we look might have a difference in how we operate?"

Clawson Huibregtse said she has found that people relate to her differently than they do to her male colleagues, almost as if they see her as a sister or mother. That helps her in her work: She’s had staff at a jail ask her how she got a man with a violent history into handcuffs, for example.

“Female officers have to use force, that happens all the time,” Clawson Huibregtse said, “but we have a different perspective and a different way of de-escalating situations than sometimes males do.”

A study of the Chicago Police Department published this year in the journal *Science* found that female officers use less force than male officers. Female officers also are less likely to be the subject of citizen complaints, according to a 2008 study published in the Law Enforcement Executive Forum.

Other research also shows that women are [more skilled](#) at assessing the policing needs of diverse communities and get [better outcomes](#) for victims of sexual assault.

“For all of those reasons, it’s important to have women as part of the workforce,” said Kym Craven, executive director of the National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives. “Our country’s demographics is half women. To not have that reflected in policing is passe. We need to come up with the times. This is a job that women can do.”

But getting more women on board isn’t easy.

The challenges

Illinois state Trooper Omoayena Williams has four kids: a 9-year-old, a 7-year-old and 4-year-old twins. “It’s busy,” Williams said with a laugh in an interview.

She shares her experiences as a mother and a trooper when she meets women in her role as a recruitment coordinator with the Illinois State Police.

“Women, we have to figure out how to balance our career and our families,” she said. “For women, it can be intimidating when you walk into a room and see a lot of men, since it’s a male-dominated profession.”

Williams was born in Nigeria, and her family moved to Chicago when she was 13. She didn’t realize Illinois had a state police department. She was training to join the Marine Corps when she met a state trooper who told her about the agency. She decided to try it, and over the past decade has worked her way up from patrol to recruitment.

Like Williams, many people in law enforcement have a military background; as a result, much of recruiting has been focused there. But women represent about 16% of enlisted forces, so starting from that pool means starting from another male-dominated field.

A lot of agencies don’t do enough to change the perception that state policing isn’t for women, Craven said.

“When you have recruitment videos and recruitment brochures focused on SWAT operations and guns, which is not most of what law enforcement is, it’s not inclusive of women and diversity,” Craven said. Another barrier specific to state policing is that new hires might be placed at a station, often known as barracks, in a town that requires a lengthy commute or even a move.

“When you apply with a state agency ... you don’t know where the vacancies are,” said Charis Paulson, director of compliance and accreditation at the Iowa Department of Public Safety. “When you apply with a city, you know where it is.”

And, of course, there’s the rigorous physical exam, which women are slightly less likely to pass. A Bureau of Justice Statistics [study](#) of state and local police training academies in 2018 found male recruits completed basic training at a higher rate than females — 88% and 81%, respectively.

“Our academy is paramilitary. It is extensive training. It is not only mentally tough, but it’s physically tough,” said Carolyn Huynh, deputy chief of training, recruiting and community engagement with the New Mexico State Police.

Compounding the problem is that only 3% of law enforcement leadership positions are held by women, according to Craven of the National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives. As Smith-Kea put it: “We can’t be what we can’t see.”

Chiefs typically select who gets promoted, said Ivonne Roman, the former police chief of Newark, New Jersey. “It’s difficult when there are so few women, and only a limited amount of women who are mentored to filter up the ranks.”

The solutions

With these barriers in mind, at least five state policing agencies have made a goal to have 30% of their recruits by 2030 be women. Those states (and their current percentage of female troopers) are Illinois (10%), Iowa (6%), Massachusetts (5%), Vermont (13%) and Washington (10%).

The goal comes under the 30x30 Initiative, a collaboration between the Policing Project at NYU Law, the National Police Foundation, the Police Executive Research Forum, the National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives and others. McGough and Roman co-founded the initiative after hosting a 2018 [research summit](#) on women in policing through the National Institute of Justice.

In addition to the state agencies, more than 100 departments from 34 states have signed up since the initiative started in March. The list includes several of the largest agencies in the country: the New York City, Philadelphia and Los Angeles police departments.

The 30% goal was chosen based on the theory of representative bureaucracy, McGough said: “It’s not until you reach 30% that the underrepresented group is able to positively benefit the culture of that group.” Scribner of the Vermont State Police called the initiative a “no-brainer.” “Why wouldn’t a department sign up for this?” she said.

Her department recently purchased portable pods to give nursing mothers a private place to pump.

In Iowa, the state police agency has started to offer applicants a practice round of the physical exam.

“They know exactly what to expect,” Paulson of the department said, “what it will be like, and can see where they are at and what to work on to be sure they are ready when testing day comes.”

For a few state agencies, recruiting women isn’t a specific focus.

“I think it’s beneficial to have women, but I also don’t want to make it that narrow,” said Lt. Mark Riley, spokesperson for the Georgia State Patrol, where 2% of troopers are female. “I think it’s important and beneficial to have people from all walks of life: females, males, different ethnic groups, religions. You never know who you’re going to come into contact with on the side of the road.”

Similarly, asked whether the Florida Highway Patrol had any recruitment efforts targeting women, Capt. Peter Bergstresser said in an email the agency is “constantly recruiting qualified applicants, regardless of gender or race.” Women make up 10% of the department.

Still, even more agencies said they are taking steps to bring women to their departments.

The Michigan State Police isn’t part of the 30x30 Initiative but has set its own goal of having 20% of its applicant pool be female by December 2022. The agency posts recruitment and staff data [on its website](#). Currently 9% of the agency is female.

The agency has started telling recruits where they will be stationed earlier in the process and tries to keep them close to home, according to spokesperson Shanon Banner.

The New Mexico State Police has taken similar steps. The department, which is less than 8% female, also has added more women to the recruitment team, according to Huynh.

	<p>The agency also has revamped its social media accounts, including a new TikTok account, to feature more women.</p> <p>In the agency's first video, an officer dons her uniform to the tune of "Unstoppable" by pop singer Sia. The video has been viewed more than 650,000 times since it was posted in March. "It shows the human side of the badge, and it gets the conversation started," Huynh said.</p> <p>Back in North Dakota, Clawson Huibregtse said she gets that the idea of being on patrol in the middle of nowhere is intimidating. So is the uncertainty of being posted in an unknown town, not to mention passing through the academy — all challenges heightened for women considering law enforcement.</p> <p>"From a young age, you're told what you're capable of and what you're not. And so then when you become an adult, you still have those same things instilled in your head," she said. "At the end of the day, one of our best recruitment efforts is to tell somebody that we believe that they could do it."</p> <p>She thinks more women can.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Seattle hot housing market cooling down
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/heres-one-more-sign-of-cooling-in-seattles-hot-housing-market/
GIST	<p>Seattle's housing market may feel red hot, but try telling that to home buyers in Phoenix, San Diego, Tampa and Dallas.</p> <p>After months as the third-hottest housing market in the country, the Seattle area slipped to fifth place in a ranking of single-family home price growth released Tuesday. The ranking is one more indicator that a fall cooldown has arrived in the Puget Sound region, with prices leveling off, buyers facing fewer bidding wars, and sellers offering occasional price drops.</p> <p>Still, home prices here are up about 24% over last year, according to the S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller Home Price Index. That's a sharper uptick than in New York, Los Angeles, Portland and San Francisco, among other cities.</p> <p>The index, which uses a three-month rolling average of home prices, reflects parts of King, Snohomish and Pierce counties. The measure lags by two months, so this week's data reflects home sales through August.</p> <p>For the 27th consecutive month, Phoenix topped the list, this time with a 33% year-over-year increase.</p> <p>Nationally, home prices are up nearly 20% compared to last year. That's roughly level with the increase in July, suggesting "that the growth in housing prices, while still very strong, may be beginning to decelerate," said S&P Managing Director Craig Lazzara in a statement.</p> <p>CoreLogic Deputy Chief Economist Selma Hepp called the figures a sign that "buyer fatigue is setting in, particularly among higher-priced homes."</p> <p>Housing markets all over the country heated up soon after the pandemic hit last year, driven by a combination of low interest rates attracting more buyers, potential sellers holding onto their homes thus limiting the number of houses for sale, and investors and millennials trying to get into the market.</p> <p>The spike in prices is making homeownership more difficult — and not just because of bidding wars.</p>

With rising prices, mortgage payments for new homebuyers are climbing, too. For buyers putting down a 5% down payment in the Seattle area, the median monthly mortgage payment last month was up 12% compared to a year earlier, according to Redfin.

As remote work has taken hold, local buyers have faced some of the stiffest competition outside major cities such as Seattle.

In King County, for example, median home prices in August were up 26% on the Eastside, 16% in Southwest King County and 18% in Southeast King County compared to 2020, according to separate data released earlier this month by the Northwest Multiple Listing Service.

In Seattle, the \$850,000 median home price was up 4% over the same time in 2020. In Bellevue east of Interstate 405, the \$1.3 million median home price last month was up 29% compared to a year earlier.

Areas of Snohomish and Pierce counties have become more competitive for home shoppers, said Zillow senior economist Jeff Tucker.

“Demand has surged in these cities thanks to the declining relevance of commute times, as more employees expect to only visit their offices occasionally, if ever, and are now feeling confident enough to buy a home based on that expectation,” Tucker said in a statement.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Haiti police outgunned by gangs, underpaid
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/world/americas/haiti-police-gangs.html
GIST	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Two officers with Haiti’s rapid-reaction force pulled up to a bridge in the capital, Port-au-Prince, to set up a checkpoint and do an afternoon’s worth of work searching for guns, drugs, wanted criminals and kidnapping victims.</p> <p>On each side of the bridge were neighborhoods under siege by gangs. In one of them, Haitian officials believe a powerful gang, 400 Mawozo, is holding a group of American and Canadian missionaries hostage for ransom. But the officers couldn’t venture into the nearby streets: the criminal organizations surrounding them have better guns, better motorcycles, and more fuel.</p> <p>So the officers kept to the bridge, frustrated at the power imbalance that leaves them helpless and much of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and the nation under the control of criminal organizations like 400 Mawozo.</p> <p>“We took this job knowing the risks,” said Edvie Boursiquot, 41, an officer with the rapid-reaction force who joined the police 14 years ago. “But we need to go to work knowing that we have a government that supports us, that it is looking out for us. That we are given what we need to fight the gangs, better arms, better motorcycles.”</p> <p>Gangs have long been powerful in Haiti, often serving as muscle for politicians who, in turn, provided them with weapons and vehicles. But under Haiti’s last elected president, Jovenel Moïse, and since his assassination in July, the power of gangs has only grown, while that of the police, dependent on an increasingly depleted state, has diminished, leaving officers even more underfunded, underequipped and severely underpaid.</p> <p>The power gap was evident on a recent morning, as the Haitian police’s rapid-reaction force, known as the Motorized Intervention Unit, set up a checkpoint on a bridge. On either side were gang-controlled neighborhoods that had been nearly emptied as impoverished residents preferred to abandon homes and possessions rather than live under the sway of a gang that kills and robs at will.</p> <p>The police know that in one of the neighborhoods, Croix-des-Bouquets, the dominant 400 Mawozo gang is holding 16 Americans and a Canadian hostage, threatening their lives if the religious aid organization they belong to does not pay a ransom of \$1 million per head.</p>

But entering the neighborhood is out of the question. So the officers instead worked on the bridge, checking passing cars for guns, drugs and wanted criminals, frustrated by their inability to do more.

“The conditions have changed,” said Ms. Boursiquot, who rode to the checkpoint on the back of a colleague’s motorcycle because there was not another one for her. “They get worse every year.”

Ms. Boursiquot’s colleague, Ulrick Jacques, 40, interjected, pulling down the balaclava he wears to protect his identity from gang members so reporters could see the anger on his face.

“I am ready to fight, but I need the peace of mind that this government is backing me,” Mr. Jacques said. “That every day I go to work, no one will starve at home, that I can feed my children.”

Instead, Mr. Jacques and Ms. Boursiquot said, they have not received a raise in years while gangs swell their ranks and arm themselves with more sophisticated weapons than they have.

Both officers had joined the police 14 years ago and had been promoted over a year ago, moving up a rank, they said, but they had not yet received the raise that accompanies the promotion and can barely support their families on the \$220 they earn a month.

What few government-issued benefits they have, like food or health care, are being clawed back.

When her daughter broke her knee last year, Ms. Boursiquot took her to the hospital, only to discover that the government had bumped her three children from her insurance. She had to pay \$90 — close to half her monthly income — to mend her daughter’s knee and for medication. Her husband, who left years ago, does not help support their family.

Hunger is now a regular aspect of lives, their families joining the ranks of the undernourished in Haiti, Mr. Jacques said. Officers receive a special debit card that allows them to buy food at grocery stores, he said, but the government has not topped it up in over two months.

Of Haiti’s 11 million people, 4.4 million need food assistance, according to the United Nations.

“We are down to our nails,” Mr. Jacques said, his voice shaking with rage. “How can you explain that schools are open and we cannot afford the tuition? That grocery stores are full and we can only look at the food from the outside?”

The two police officers worried that they, too, could soon join the increasing number of Haitian citizens who are internally displaced by gangs.

A few miles south of the police’s checkpoint on the bridge, a stone’s throw from the United States Embassy, is the Tabarre Issa neighborhood, where over 3,000 people fled this year after gangs fired on their homes and warned them to leave or be killed.

To the north is Croix-des-Bouquets, where the 400 Mawozo gang is holding the kidnapped missionaries with [Christian Aid Ministries](#) and their children, the youngest an 8-month-old.

In a brazen display of authority, when the leader of 400 Mawozo issued his execution threat against the hostages, he did so on the streets of Croix-des-Bouquet, surrounded by hundreds of gang members as American and Haitian officials surveilled the area.

The Motorized Intervention Unit, or B.I.M. as it is known, was started in 2007 under President René Préal, intended to be a rapid-response unit of the police, able to mobilize quickly on motorbikes and quad bikes, nimbly navigating the traffic-gnarled streets of Port-au-Prince.

The force, considered almost an elite unit with special training and funding, was considered one of the most efficient and effective units of the Haitian police until President Michel Martelly was sworn into office in 2011.

The unit atrophied under Mr. Martelly's presidency, the government using the B.I.M. to provide personal protection to officials and their family members and to guard government buildings. A large order of motorbikes intended to replace the police's aging fleet was made and paid for under Mr. Martelly's government, but the vehicles were never delivered, causing a scandal.

Now, the force uses lower-cost Chinese bikes called Loncin, which police officers say tend to fall apart. On the bridge into Croix-des-Bouquets, the police continued to check vehicles and Haitians who streamed by on foot — among them Nahomie Bauvais, 25, who had her 2-month-old in her arms.

She hates the insecurity that hangs over her neighborhood, but feels she has no option beyond hoping that the gangs leave her and her two children alone and that the government retakes and exerts control over Croix-des-Bouquet again.

It is a long shot, she knows. And it would not solve all of her problems. If the government is unable to provide the basics — electricity, security, trash collection — even in wealthy neighborhoods where powerful politicians live, there is little reason to believe it will do so in impoverished ones like hers.

"There is no state here," Ms. Bauvais said. "I live day by day. What else can you do when you hear gunshots through the night and wake up, hoping for the best?"

She worried about the growing appeal of gangs to former classmates and friends who idle listlessly on sidewalks, playing game after game of dominoes, no jobs to go to or food to eat.

"We have to look out and protect ourselves," Ms. Bauvais said.

Comments like that irk Mr. Jacques, who argues that he and his colleagues try their best, even if they feel just as helpless as civilians like Ms. Bauvais.

"We are here working, but can you really work? When you have no motorcycles, no fuel to go from neighborhood to neighborhood?" Mr. Jacques asked. "The population sees us with bad eyes, they think we aren't doing anything. They don't know that we try, but we cannot."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Canada PM promises activist government
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/world/canada/justin-trudeau-cabinet.html
GIST	<p>OTTAWA — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau unveiled his new cabinet on Tuesday, in a muted inauguration during which the Canadian leader laid out a sweeping agenda meant to reinvigorate support for his Liberal Party after an underwhelming and unpopular early election in September.</p> <p>The swearing-in ceremony, dampened by pandemic restrictions and a chilly autumnal rain, was the first major event since the new government was formed by an election held last month that denied Mr. Trudeau the voting majority he had sought in the House of Commons.</p> <p>The inauguration also came in the aftermath of a misstep by Mr. Trudeau that prompted him to apologize to Indigenous people for having skipped a new holiday recognizing Canada's history of injustices toward them. The lapse eroded the confidence of some Canadians in his personal judgment.</p> <p>If Mr. Trudeau felt chastened by Canadians' rejection of his bid for parliamentary control, he gave no sign of it in his address on Tuesday. After showing off his new cabinet, he announced renewed commitments to cutting greenhouse gas emissions and advancing reconciliation with Indigenous people, as well as spurring affordable housing and economic growth.</p>

“One of the things we saw very clearly in this election was that Canadians are expecting big things to be done by Parliament and by this government,” Mr. Trudeau said at a news conference. “With a refreshed and reinvigorated team around me, I’m really excited about what we’re going to be able to accomplish.”

Six years after he was first sworn in, Mr. Trudeau finds his reputation these days dimmed from that of the golden politician idolized by many Canadians and much of the world when he first led his Liberal Party to an overwhelming victory in 2015. The failure of Mr. Trudeau’s Liberals in the recent election to win a majority for the second consecutive time was clear indication of that.

Like many observers, Stewart Prest, a lecturer in political science at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia, said no political party emerged from the vote with much to brag about.

“There wasn’t really a winner,” he said. “There was just a whole bunch of losers.”

While Mr. Trudeau increased the Liberal Party’s position by a handful of seats, he remains well short of a majority within Parliament, which largely resembles the one that was dissolved in August. Nevertheless, several analysts say that Mr. Trudeau is in a significantly stronger position than before despite his election disappointment.

For one thing, he is unlikely to face another vote anytime soon, experts say.

Canada’s campaign finance laws make it almost impossible for parties to raise large sums of money quickly, so most political parties are in no financial position to go back to voters in the near future — a move few of them would welcome, in any case. That’s particularly true for the left-of-center New Democratic Party, which, as in the last Parliament, will most likely be Mr. Trudeau’s key ally in voting.

“None of them want another election,” said Brooke Jeffrey, a professor of political science at Concordia University in Montreal who has been an adviser to other Liberal leaders. That puts the opposition in a weak position when it comes to making demands in exchange for their support, Ms. Jeffrey noted.

“Trudeau has clear sailing for at least two years and he might even get four,” she said.

On Tuesday, Mr. Trudeau indicated that he will use that position of strength as Canada gradually leaves the pandemic behind to advance issues that have been central to his political agenda, starting with economic recovery and also including climate change, mental health and government-funded child care.

While Indigenous issues have historically have not been a major political force, they rose to the top of the national consciousness in the spring after the discovery of the remains of students buried on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia. That was followed by several other similar discoveries, reviving a painful and traumatic history for Indigenous communities.

Before the election, Mr. Trudeau declared a national holiday, making Sept. 30 the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

But he undermined the gesture by spending the day traveling across the country with his family for a postelection beach vacation. Compounding the snub, his office did not respond to two requests from the Tk’emlups te Secwepemc First Nation, home to the Kamloops school site, to attend ceremonies there.

Last week, Mr. Trudeau traveled to the First Nation to apologize at a gathering where he was repeatedly, if respectfully, criticized for the timing of his vacation.

It was the third time Mr. Trudeau’s vacation plans had turned into a political headache, reinforcing the view of him among some Canadians as an out-of-touch member of the elite.

On Tuesday, the prime minister also used the cabinet announcement to try to hit reset on some government institutions that have been plagued by scandal, among them the military. Its leadership up to the most senior rank has been subject to multiple sexual abuse and misconduct allegations and investigations in recent months. “They simply still don’t get it,” a clearly frustrated Mr. Trudeau said earlier this month.

Mr. Trudeau replaced his defense minister, Harjit Sajjan, a former lieutenant-colonel in the Canadian Army who fought in Afghanistan, with Anita Anand, a former law professor who was the cabinet minister responsible for Canada’s successful vaccine purchase program during the pandemic. The move helped preserve gender balance across the top posts, as the prime minister has committed to doing since 2015.

The prime minister also named new leaders to oversee his climate agenda.

Mr. Trudeau has been long seen as a champion of climate reform, but significant greenhouse gas emission cuts he’s achieved in many parts of the economy have been largely offset by increased production in Alberta’s oil sands. In recent months, some environmentalists have questioned whether he has been doing enough to cut emissions.

On Tuesday, the prime minister named a relentless critic of the oil industry to be his new minister of environment and climate change, turning to Steven Guilbeault, a co-founder of Équiterre, a Quebec-based environment group, who previously worked on climate issues at Greenpeace Canada.

Mr. Guilbeault was once arrested after scaling an observation tower that looms over downtown Toronto to unfurl a banner condemning the climate records of the Canada and the United States. His appointment could signal that Mr. Trudeau plans to temper his support of Canada’s oil and gas industry.

After leading his party through two elections in which it has emerged with a minority government, Mr. Trudeau has faced growing questions about his political future. On Tuesday, asked if he would lead the Liberals into the next vote, Mr. Trudeau, who is given to long answers, was uncharacteristically concise.

“Yes,” he said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Return to office meets supply chain snarls
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/return-to-office-meets-supply-chain-snarls-11635269995?mod=hp_minor_pos13
GIST	<p>The push by companies to bring workers back to the office is running up against the global supply chain logjam.</p> <p>Electronics industry executives and experts say the lead times to get commercial desktop computers and other equipment has increased as suppliers shift gears from the scramble for work-from-home setups early in the pandemic to office and hybrid work.</p> <p>“We are looking at up to 120 days’ wait for some large enterprises if they have specific components required, and right now they are planning to receive the devices in January and February,” said Mikako Kitagawa, a research director at Gartner Inc. who focuses on tech. “Generally large corporations are desperate to find the devices.”</p> <p>Gartner said in its preliminary third-quarter assessment that shipments of personal computers in the U.S. fell 8.8% in the quarter from the same period of 2020 despite higher business demand. That is, in part, because demand from students waned after schools reopened, but also because shortages of components including semiconductors constrained production.</p> <p>“It’s not only semiconductors. It’s also plastic, resin, copper and steel” that are in short supply, said Jim Suva, a Citigroup Inc. analyst. He said heavier, bulkier electronic equipment like desktops and monitors is often shipped on container ships, which are backed up at U.S. ports.</p>

Personal-computer manufacturers are betting that more widespread hybrid work, where employees maintain the ability to work from both the office and at home, will keep demand buoyant.

But production of goods like laptops, keyboards and monitors remains constrained as manufacturers compete with each other for chips and other key components, and distribution remains sluggish.

China's Lenovo Group Ltd., the world's largest personal-computer company with 23.7% of global shipments in the third quarter, according to Gartner, said congestion in ocean transportation and flight cancellations have affected its deliveries.

"I would say that undoubtedly there are delays," said Gareth Davies, head of global logistics at Lenovo. "We factored those in—we make sure that our customers have complete transparency and visibility."

Analysts say there isn't much that electronics companies or their customers can do in the near term to bulk up inventories and speed up the flow of goods.

Production constraints stretch across much of the manufacturing sector, said Sidney Ho, a Deutsche Bank AG research analyst, so employers can't avoid it by purchasing from different PC sellers. He said factory closures in Southeast Asia, power-supply issues in China and slower production due to social distancing in factories are holding back production for a range of suppliers.

Covid-19-related shutdowns led imports of crucial semiconductor components from Vietnam and Malaysia to fall 36% by August, Goldman Sachs Group Inc. analysts wrote in an Oct. 26 report, adding that they expect the supply of chips "to remain constrained through at least mid-2022."

HP Inc., which was second to Lenovo in the Gartner rankings of market share, has a growing backlog of unfilled orders, Alex Cho, HP's president of personal systems, said during an analyst meeting last week. He said the company is developing more direct relationships with suppliers and securing long-term agreements for crucial commodities to maintain its pace of production.

The computer seller is also "simplifying our portfolio to increase commonality of components across product lines" and improving its management of suppliers, inventories, and its ability to match demand with supply, Chief Executive Officer Enrique Lores said during that meeting.

"Just as traditional office work is entering a period of profound change, so too is industrial production," Mr. Lores said. "The pandemic has shown how fragile the current supply chain ecosystem is. There is a clear need to increase flexibility and resilience by producing closer to customers."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Pierce Co. sheriff violated dept. standards
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3204827/independent-investigation-finds-pierce-county-sheriff-troyer-in-violation-of-department-standards/
GIST	<p>Pierce County Sheriff Ed Troyer has been found to have violated the department's policies and standards in a confrontation with newspaper carrier Sedrick Altheimer, according to an independent investigation.</p> <p>In said confrontation, Troyer claimed that Altheimer threatened to kill or harm him. A significant police presence was summoned in response.</p> <p>The independent investigation was conducted by Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, commissioned by the Pierce County Council in April 2021.</p> <p>It is separate from the criminal investigation conducted by the attorney general's office, which charged Troyer with two misdemeanors: one count of false reporting, and one count of making a false or misleading statement to a public servant.</p>

The independent investigation was unable to substantiate that Troyer was threatened. It also found that “a reasonable person could conclude that Sheriff Troyer exhibited an improper bias in his confrontation with Mr. Altheimer.”

The specific policies of which Sheriff Troyer was found in violation largely relate to off duty conduct and police reporting without bias.

That policy forbids biased reporting in the interest of avoiding racial discrimination. While the report finds no explicit mention of race in what transpired between the two individuals, Troyer repeatedly referred to Altheimer as “homeless.”

“We find by a preponderance of the available evidence that Sheriff Troyer engaged in conduct that his Department expressly forbids — employing an economic bias to support his mistaken belief that Mr. Altheimer must be engaged in criminal activity,” the report reads.

The report deferred the issue of criminal law violation to the attorney general.

In terms of potential disciplinary recommendation, the report stated the following:

There are three significant parts to the disciplinary analysis we have been asked to address.

One ... is that Sheriff Troyer gave two versions of important events extremely close in time — on the 911 call and to Officer Lawless — that are diametrically opposed and cannot both be true. Thus, we concluded he was either untruthful on the 911 call or he was untruthful to Officer Lawless who was investigating a potential crime.

Two, Sheriff Troyer exhibited bias in his decision-making. This not only violates PCSD policy, but it strikes at the very heart of fair and just policing. Finally, Sheriff Troyer’s 911 call created an all hands, highly emergent, and fluid series of events. The potential for harm to Mr. Altheimer, responding officers, and the general public was significant.

Being mindful that the range of discipline available to an elected sheriff when disciplining a deputy lies somewhere on a continuum between no discipline and termination from employment, we conclude Sheriff Troyer’s conduct, and the results of that conduct, lie at very far end of the “seriousness” scale of that continuum. Ironically, the appropriate level of discipline would reside with Sheriff Troyer, the very person whose judgment in these matters has been called into question.

In conclusion, the report deferred discipline to the court of law as well as future voters as “Sheriff Troyer was elected by the public and answers to them,” the report reads.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Covid cases falling in every region
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/briefing/covid-cases-falling-delta.html
GIST	<p>It is time for one of The Morning’s occasional updates on the state of the pandemic. Today’s is focused on the U.S. and organized around three main points.</p> <p>1. Covid’s retreat continues</p> <p>The number of new daily Covid-19 cases has plunged 57 percent since peaking on Sept. 1. Almost as encouraging as the magnitude of the decline is its breadth: Cases have been declining in every region.</p> <p>Forecasting Covid’s future is extremely difficult, as we all should know by now, and it’s certainly possible that cases will rise again in the coming weeks. But the geographic breadth of the decline does offer reason for optimism.</p>

Past Covid increases have generally started in one part of the country — like the South this past summer or the New York region in early 2020 — and then gone national. Today, there is no regional surge that seems to have the makings of a nationwide surge.

Yes, there are some local hot spots, as has almost always been the case since the pandemic began. ([You can look up your county](#).) Several of the hot spots are in northern parts of the country, like Alaska, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota and a few counties near the Canadian border in New Hampshire and Vermont. This pattern has led to some speculation that the onset of cold weather is causing the increases by moving more activity indoors — and that the entire country will soon experience a rise in caseloads.

That does not seem to be the most likely scenario, however. In most colder regions, including both [Canada](#) and the densely populated parts of the northern U.S., cases are still falling. The biggest problem for Alaska and the Mountain West is probably not the weather; it's the vaccine skepticism. Idaho is [the nation's least vaccinated state](#), and several other Western states are only slightly ahead of it.

The C.D.C. tracks a range of Covid forecasting models. On average, the models predict that new daily cases in the U.S. [will fall roughly another 20 percent](#) over the next three weeks.

The bottom line: There is no reason to expect another Covid surge anytime soon, but surges don't always announce themselves in advance.

2. Severity looks stable

When the Delta variant began spreading this summer, many people worried that it was both much more contagious than earlier versions of the virus [and much more severe](#). Only one of those two fears seems to be true.

Delta is clearly more contagious, which is the main reason that every metric of the pandemic — cases, hospitalizations and deaths — soared this summer. But a typical Covid case during the Delta wave was about as severe as a typical case during the earlier stages of the pandemic. During the wave in late 2020 and early this year, about 1.2 percent of positive cases led to death; during the Delta wave, the share was 1.1 percent.

Scientific studies trying to answer the severity question more precisely have come to conflicting conclusions. Some have found Delta to be more severe than other versions of the virus, and others have found that it is not. Until the research becomes clearer, the best guess may be that Delta is modestly more severe, which could explain why hospitalizations and death rates have held steady even as vaccination rates have risen.

“Delta may be a little more serious, but not materially so,” Dr. Robert Wachter, chair of the department of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, told me.

This pattern can influence how you think about your day-to-day activities. If you are vaccinated (and boosted, if eligible) and you were comfortable socializing indoors and without a mask last spring, you can probably feel comfortable doing so again, now or soon. Wachter adds: “Some older people or those with medical conditions may want to be sure that everybody else indoors with them is vaccinated before removing their mask.”

3. The U.S. is underperforming

Despite all the encouraging news, one shadow still hangs over the U.S.: The pandemic does not need to be nearly as bad as it is.

About 1,500 Americans have died of Covid every day over the past week. For older age groups, the virus remains a leading cause of death. And the main reason is that millions of Americans have chosen to remain unvaccinated. Many of them are older and have underlying medical conditions, leaving them vulnerable to severe versions of Covid.

	<p>For older people, the effects of vaccination are profound. In late August, near the height of the Delta wave, 24 out of every 10,000 unvaccinated Americans 65 and above were hospitalized with Covid symptoms, according to the C.D.C. Among fully vaccinated Americans 65 and above, the number was 1.5 per 10,000.</p> <p>Even so, many Americans are saying no to a shot. Among affluent countries, the U.S. is one of the least vaccinated, trailing Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and others. Less vaccination means more death: (These Times maps show the vaccination rates for each country.)</p> <p>The low vaccination rate in the U.S. is another consequence of our polarized politics and our high levels of socioeconomic inequality. Only 67 percent of American adults without a four-year college degree have received a shot, compared with 82 percent of college graduates, according to the most recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll. And only 58 percent of self-identified Republicans are vaccinated, compared with 90 percent of Democrats.</p> <p>It's a triumph of misinformation. Offered a lifesaving drug to counteract a highly contagious virus, many Americans are instead choosing to take their chances.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Whiplash: historic drought now downpour
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/oct/26/weather-whiplash-historic-downpour-interrupts-historic-drought
GIST	<p>Over the span of two days, dramatic scenes of dried landscapes and wildfires that have defined California's summer were replaced with surging rivers, floods and mudflows as a historic rainstorm – deemed a category 5 atmospheric river – pummeled the state.</p> <p>For scientists, the storm – though shocking in its magnitude – was not a surprise. It's been clear that the climate crisis would intensify the extremes between wet and dry seasons, but many wonder whether this weather whiplash is a preview of catastrophes to come.</p> <p>Steven Ostoja, the director of the US Department of Agriculture's California Climate Hub, said even though climate scientists have expected shifts of this intensity, it was nonetheless startling to witness. Just days before the storm the state's capital of Sacramento, where Ostoja is based, set a record of more than 200 days without measurable rain. "All of a sudden it's just like, my God. I have never seen it rain this hard outside of being in the Belizean rainforest," he said.</p> <p>Questions remain, however, as to whether the downpour will make a dent in the ongoing drought, which has seen many of the state's reservoirs sink to historic low levels.</p> <p>The storm did bring welcome gains. Lake Oroville rose roughly 25ft, taking on hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water. But even that increase amounted to a modest change, from 22% to 27% full. Shasta Lake – the state's largest – added just 1%, going from 21% to 22%. Most of California's reservoirs are still far below where they should be, even after tens of billions of gallons flooded in. Roughly 3ft of snow fell in the Sierras, but unless temperatures stay low through the rest of autumn, the snow might not stay for long.</p> <p>Even the thirstiest landscapes were ill-equipped to absorb the heavy rain, and it's too early in the season for much of the water to be stored as snow. To have a true impact on the drought, California needs a wet winter. One big storm – even a huge one like this – won't be enough to turn the tide.</p> <p>"One storm this early in the water year does not predict the rest of the winter storm season," said Michael Anderson, a climatologist with the state's department of water resources. La Niña, he noted, referring to a weather pattern that typically brings more variability with less precipitation over the south-west, spells a return to dry conditions in California after this system passes.</p>

“This storm was historic in nature by its magnitude,” he said, but much more is needed to lift the region out of the drought, especially in areas like the central and southern regions that barely benefited from the storm.

The rain did serve up some notable good news though – it extinguished wildfires still smoldering in the state. Close to [2.5m acres have burned](#) in California so far this year according to Cal fire, nearly double the five-year average, but scientists say this storm will probably dampen any future infernos.

“This storm should put a definitive end on the wildfire season in northern California,” said Park Williams, a climate scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles. In southern California, which didn’t get drenched to the same degree, the picture isn’t as clear. But it is hopeful.

“I think it’s probably still too early to rule out the possibility of [a southern California] November wildfire, should the next two to three weeks be hot and dry and followed by a strong Santa Ana event,” Williams continued. “But despite that uncertainty, this rain event has definitely substantially increased the odds that the fire season is over in southern California as well.”

While this year’s fire season could be ending, this winter sets the stage for the one that will follow. More precipitation is needed to ensure another bad burn isn’t right around the corner.

The state is widening its weather extremes, experiencing stronger storms interspersed with intense dry spells. The last historic drought, which stretched between 2012 and 2016, was followed with the wettest year in California history in 2017. Two years later, in 2019, the state had its fifth best snowpack. By 2020, the cycle continued, and after a winter without much precipitation, 2021 delivered more disastrous dryness.

“California can flip in a moment’s notice,” said Andrew Hoell, a meteorologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Physical Sciences Laboratory, noting that even during the wet season the climate stays pretty dry. That’s why one storm usually won’t do the trick. “You need a constant supply of moisture pretty consistently through the wet season to really impact your ecology on the ground,” Hoell said, particularly when it comes to growing back dried-out vegetation.

Because California typically gets rain only during a three- to four-month span each year, the rainfall in the next few months will determine the effects for the next year or more.

The USDA’s Ostoja said he saw these extreme events as system resetters, testing resilience to changes that are otherwise happening more subtly. These intense weather events can bring attention to the developing crisis he and other scientists are seeing in the data.

But “it really remains to be seen,” Ostoja said, of the role this storm will play in months to come. “We are just cleaning up from it now,” he added, noting that it’s too soon to know the longer-term dynamics. “Of course, we all hope this is the beginning of a wet winter – but the background information suggests otherwise.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Mexico govt. resists vaccinating children
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/26/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#covid-mexico-vaccine-children
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY — As U.S. officials prepare to expand Covid vaccine eligibility to children ages 5 to 11, the Mexican government has resisted calls to vaccinate youths, despite a court order that it do so.</p> <p>This month a judge ordered Mexico’s government to vaccinate anyone aged 12 to 17 after the parents of a 15-year-old girl sued to get their daughter vaccinated, just one of many lawsuits from parents demanding that their children be inoculated.</p>

But President Andrés Manuel López Obrador dismissed the ruling as “not definitive” and hinted at challenging the decision, saying during a news conference that “legally this is going to be respected, but at the same time, we are going to go to the relevant authority to clarify” the court’s decision.

Whether the government would mount such a challenge remains unclear, but the president’s rhetoric is emblematic of Mexico’s continued resistance to allow minors to be inoculated, even as regulators in the United States and other countries have increasingly approved shots for children.

Mexico’s medical safety agency [has granted the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine](#) emergency use authorization for youths 12 and over, but the government has refused to allow the shots to be administered to most minors, and has played down the risks Covid-19 poses to children.

Mexico has fully vaccinated only about 41 percent of its population, according to [Our World in Data](#). The government has said it should concentrate on vaccinating the millions of adults who have yet to get shots, and put off vaccinating otherwise healthy children until the vaccines are proved to be safe for them.

The stance has been criticized by public health and political experts. Some say the government’s resistance to vaccinating children stems from a lack of planning and insufficient vaccine supplies.

“This mess comes from the lack of preparation,” said Xavier Tello, a public health policy expert in Mexico City, adding that the government has “no strategy.”

[Hundreds of parents](#) have taken the government to court and demanded shots for their children, and many have succeeded.

In the wake of the mounting media and legal pressure, Mr. López Obrador’s government [said last month](#) that it would begin vaccinating children over 12 who had an underlying condition, which could mean that more than one million are now eligible. But the government is holding firm on its commitment to vaccinate adults first.

“There is a vaccination plan,” Mr. López Obrador said this month, regarding the recent ruling mandating vaccines for teenagers. “A public policy cannot be defined based on the interest of a person or a group.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Louisiana lifts indoor mask mandate
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/26/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#louisiana-covid-restictions-governor-edwards
GIST	<p>Gov. John Bel Edwards of Louisiana lifted the state’s indoor mask mandate on Tuesday for at least the next four weeks.</p> <p>“I stand here today optimistic, relieved that the worst of the fourth surge is behind us now,” said Mr. Edwards, a Democrat. “We have made tremendous progress, and I have no doubt that reinstating the mask mandate was key to this.”</p> <p>But he cautioned that the pandemic was not over, and reminded residents who were not fully vaccinated to follow federal guidance and wear a mask. He also said that the state lagged far behind in vaccinations, ranking 45th in the country.</p> <p>Only 56 percent of state residents 12 and over are fully vaccinated, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Indoor masking is still required for students in public schools, which may opt out as long as they continue following quarantine guidance from the Centers for Disease Control. No students under age 12 are vaccinated, but an F.D.A. panel endorsed Pfizer vaccines for 5-11 year olds on Tuesday afternoon.</p>

	<p>Louisiana’s mask requirement was reinstated in August in a bid to slow community spread of the more contagious Delta variant, as the state faced its fourth and worst surge of the coronavirus. Louisiana was averaging more than 4,300 new cases per day in the first week of August, according to data compiled by The New York Times. The state had the highest per capita rate of new cases in the country and its hospitals were overflowing with patients.</p> <p>The mandate helped turn the trend lines around, and the picture looks much more positive in the last week of October, the governor said. The state is averaging 500 new coronavirus cases a day, a 31 percent decrease in the last two weeks, according to Times data.</p> <p>The number of people hospitalized has dropped 39 percent and deaths have declined 27 percent in the last two weeks. The numbers are among the state’s lowest since the pandemic began, according to state health department data.</p> <p>Mr. Edwards said that the number of hospitalized Covid patients on Tuesday was just 323, the state’s lowest number since July 2, from a peak of 3,022 10 weeks ago during the Delta surge.</p> <p>Many of Louisiana’s parishes are still considered at high risk for Covid exposure, according to the C.D.C.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 China locks down city of 4M; small outbreak
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/26/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#covid-china-lanzhou-lockdown
GIST	<p>The Chinese government ordered the northwestern city of Lanzhou locked down on Tuesday as officials carried out widespread testing to quash a small Covid-19 outbreak.</p> <p>Lanzhou, a city of about four million people, reported six new coronavirus cases on Tuesday, and a total of 39 over the past week. China, where the coronavirus first emerged in late 2019, has been battling a recent flare-up of new cases largely in the northwest of the country that were spread by domestic travel.</p> <p>The country enforces a strict “zero Covid” policy, carrying out widespread lockdowns and testing to eliminate even small-scale outbreaks.</p> <p>By Monday evening, medical workers had tested nearly 12 million people in Gansu Province, including more than 2.8 million in Lanzhou, its capital. The testing in Lanzhou continued on Tuesday.</p> <p>Residents were told to stay home and avoid all unnecessary outings.</p> <p>“The province will continue to use big data and house-by-house investigations to strengthen the management and control of key populations and key areas,” Zhang Hao, a spokesman for the provincial health commission, told a news conference. “Local communities will be utilized to strictly control the flow of people.”</p> <p>Nationwide, China announced 29 new domestic coronavirus cases on Tuesday. Most of those were concentrated in the northwest, including 15 in Alxa League, an area of Inner Mongolia. Beijing, the capital, reported three new cases on Tuesday.</p> <p>This week China has also expanded its extensive vaccination program by extending eligibility to children as young as 3.</p> <p>The effort to vaccinate younger children began Monday, according to documents issued by several provincial governments, including Hunan, Hubei and Hainan. The goal is to drive the vaccination rate above the current 76 percent.</p> <p>The government approved emergency use of vaccines produced by Sinovac and Sinopharm for children aged 3 to 17 in June, but the mass inoculation for children was limited to those aged 11 to 17.</p>

	An outbreak in Fujian last month ignited public discussion of protecting younger children, as many of those infected were kindergarten and primary school students.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Nor'easter batters NYC, Northeast
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/nyregion/new-york-rain.html
GIST	<p>A menacing early season nor'easter battered the New York City area on Tuesday, as heavy rains, strong winds and the threat of flash floods arrived in a region already scarred by deadly extreme weather this summer.</p> <p>The storm dumped more than three inches of rain in parts of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut on Tuesday, with more expected through the night. But as of Tuesday evening, it had yet to match the intensity of the deluge brought by the remnants of Hurricane Ida last month.</p> <p>After a lull on Tuesday afternoon, rain began falling again in the evening, and the storm system lingered into Wednesday morning. Meteorologists warned that the storm could still produce heavy winds, significant rainfall and flash flooding across the Northeast.</p> <p>The sprawling nor'easter began to move up through eastern Massachusetts, including Boston and Cape Cod late Tuesday, dumping up to four inches in some areas. The state was reporting about 43,000 power outages by 1 a.m. Wednesday, with winds of up to 70 miles per hour bringing down trees along the coast.</p> <p>Around New York City, the storm's resurgence threatened to snarl Wednesday morning's commute.</p> <p>The easternmost part of Long Island, the southeastern corner of Connecticut and parts of coastal Massachusetts and coastal Rhode Island were under a high wind warning until Wednesday afternoon, with the National Weather Service cautioning that "widespread power outages are expected."</p> <p>Utilities in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut reported hundreds of outages throughout the day, and officials said that they expected to see increased power failures in all three states, particularly in coastal areas, as winds intensified.</p> <p>"We almost certainly expect that number to go up, perhaps dramatically, with the higher winds that are coming later," said Gov. Philip D. Murphy of New Jersey.</p> <p>Roads flooded across the region, with flood warnings in effect through Wednesday for the Saddle River in Lodi, N.J., and for the Ramapo River in northern New Jersey and Orange and Rockland Counties in New York. The Weather Service extended a flood warning in Warren County and Sussex County through Wednesday morning after seeing "minor flooding" near streams and creeks.</p> <p>The Weather Service also said there would most likely be minor flooding in southern Connecticut and on Long Island.</p> <p>Nelson Vaz, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in New York, said that forecasters were concerned about flooding in northeastern New Jersey, where "some of the rivers are starting to come over their banks."</p> <p>Though New York City's mass transit system experienced some interruptions, the storm had far less impact than the remnants of Ida. Some buses and commuter trains, including New Jersey Transit and the Metro-North Railroad, experienced scattered weather-related delays, but the subway was operating as expected.</p> <p>As of Tuesday afternoon, intensive flash flooding had yet to materialize, though earlier in the day, parts of northeastern New Jersey that had been inundated last month — including the state's largest cities, Newark,</p>

Jersey City and Paterson — were placed under a flash flood warning that coincided with the morning commute.

Several public school districts in those areas decided to close in anticipation of the storm. Rutgers University asked instructors to move all of their classes online on Tuesday.

“In order to keep all students safe, all schools will be closed,” said Franklin Walker, the superintendent of Jersey City’s public school system, one of the largest in the state. Schools in nearby Bayonne and in Montclair were also closed.

New Jersey state troopers had responded to 188 crashes by 10 a.m. on Tuesday, the state’s police superintendent, Col. Patrick Callahan, said.

By Tuesday night, more than 4.3 inches of rain had been recorded in Brooklyn, more than 5.3 inches in Suffolk County and more than 5.2 inches in northern New Jersey, according to the Weather Service. A flash flood watch was in effect for parts of Long Island and Connecticut into Tuesday night.

The rain started falling again on Tuesday evening and was expected to continue through the night across much of the region.

Some storm drains in Midtown Manhattan were straining to keep up with the heavy rains filling the streets, backing up at the corners and creating large puddles for pedestrians to navigate. The New York Police Department reported flooding that in some cases blocked traffic during rush hour on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, a key traffic artery.

Winds of up to 35 miles per hour, with gusts reaching 60 m.p.h., were expected across coastal areas into Wednesday morning. Mr. Vaz said that parts of Long Island were particularly likely to experience very strong gusts.

Officials moved quickly to prepare for the nor’easter, in part scarred by the intensity of several storms this summer that exposed the region’s vulnerability to the extreme weather events made more frequent and intense by climate change.

“We’re not looking outside and seeing Ida today; however, every storm has to be taken seriously,” Joseph Fiordaliso, who leads New Jersey’s utility board, said at a news conference.

“Someday maybe we’ll just have a regular rainstorm. We don’t seem to get those much anymore,” he said, adding, “Climate change is real, and we have to work to mitigate as much of it as we possibly can.”

The threats were brought into stark relief last month, when torrential rain brought by Ida unleashed rushing waters that killed 11 people, including a toddler and his parents, in basement apartments in New York City. At least 43 people died across New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut amid the hurricane’s watery remnants.

Both Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York and Governor Murphy declared states of emergency Monday evening, directing agencies under their command to be ready to act on emergency response plans.

In New York City, officials had advised residents of basement apartments like those that flooded last month to be ready “to move to a higher floor during periods of heavy rain,” and urged anyone living in flood-prone areas to “keep materials such as sandbags, plywood, plastic sheeting and lumber on hand” to protect their homes.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Bond market measure: inflation will last
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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/business/inflation-interest-rates-treasury-bonds.html?surface=most-popular&fellback=false&reg_id=469079759&algo=bandit-all-surfaces_setnthitem_0_news_typekoftopn_2_5_news&variant=2_bandit-all-surfaces_guardrails_pool_hp_3d&pool=pool/eb1c3756-caa2-47cd-b3ba-0be3d88f1636&imp_id=973506824&action=click&module=Popular%20in%20The%20Times&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>Almost everyone — buyers of used cars, renters, homeowners with big heating bills and stock market investors — has been fretting about rising prices lately. But despite some of the fastest price increases in decades, investors in the Treasury bond market who are keenly attuned to inflation have been steadfast in their belief that it was a temporary phenomenon.</p> <p>That’s now changing.</p> <p>A key measure of the bond market’s expectations for inflation over the next five years — known as a break even — rose to a new high Friday, briefly topping 3 percent. That meant investors expected inflation to average about 3 percent a year for the next five years, far higher than any time in the decade before the pandemic hit. Measures of inflation expectations over longer periods, such as over the next 10 years, also rose to multiyear highs.</p> <p>The expectations of bond investors matter because, historically, officials at the Federal Reserve — who are responsible for managing inflation — watch the signals from the bond market in deciding when to raise interest rates. Higher rates tend to put the brakes on inflation — but they can also ding stock prices and slow hiring.</p> <p>“They put great stock in inflation expectations,” said Steven Friedman, a senior macroeconomist at the money management firm MacKay Shields, who was once a market analyst at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. How investors are positioning themselves influences how Fed policymakers think, he said, because, “those who are putting forward their opinions have skin in the game.”</p> <p>While the Fed chair, Jerome H. Powell, and other central bank officials have spent months saying higher inflation was a “transitory” result of pandemic-driven supply chain problems, there has lately been good reason to believe that price rises could be a more lasting concern. The Consumer Price Index reading for September, released last week, showed prices climbing 5.4 percent from the previous year — and slightly faster than they grew in August.</p> <p>But analysts say the crucial concern for bond market investors was that prices seemingly unrelated to the pandemic were also beginning to move higher. Foremost among them was monthly rents, which tend to rise for long stretches once they start moving upward. Rents jumped 0.5 percent from August to September, the quickest rise in about 20 years.</p> <p>“The market saw this as evidence that the pickup in inflation will not be as transitory as the Fed had hoped,” said John Briggs, a bond market strategist at NatWest Markets in Stamford, Conn.</p> <p>Energy prices also jumped 25 percent last month, driven by sharp increases in gasoline and fuel oil costs. Rising crude oil prices are behind the surge, and there is little sign that those pressures are going away any time soon. Benchmark American crude oil prices continue to push higher, rising 12.5 percent in October alone and over 70 percent for the year.</p> <p>And at the same time, Covid-related production snags, such as the stop-and-go recovery of auto manufacturing, continue to keep other prices elevated. Last week, a report on wholesale used car prices, which has become a closely watched indicator of inflation on Wall Street, showed the prices that dealers pay to stock their lots were surging once again. Those prices will filter through to consumers, most likely keeping used car prices high for months.</p> <p>All those factors have prompted investors to snap up inflation-protected Treasury bonds, whose payments increase to keep pace with inflation, and sell off plain vanilla Treasuries.</p>

The difference between the yields on those two types of bonds is called the break even, and it offers something of a ballpark estimate of what those who invest in the \$20-trillion-plus market for Treasury bonds believe will happen to prices. On Tuesday afternoon, the five-year break even was 2.98 percent, according to data from the bond-trading platform Tradeweb.

Investors' opinions matter a lot. For decades, the Federal Reserve's decisions about what to do with interest rates and monetary policy have been heavily influenced by the idea that inflation is as much a psychological process as an economic one. Expectations of rising inflation can become a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, so the Fed has been inclined to raise interest rates or otherwise tighten monetary policy when public opinion anticipates higher prices.

Many analysts expect the Fed to respond similarly this time — although an interest-rate increase wouldn't be the first step.

Before that could happen, the Fed would end the extraordinary steps it took to cushion the economy from the worst of the pandemic. That process is widely expected to start at the Fed's meeting next week, when its key monetary policy committee will probably begin reducing bond-buying programs that have been pumping \$120 billion into financial markets each month since the pandemic hit. Exactly how quickly the Fed would taper off that program isn't clear, but investors now seem to be betting it could be eliminated by the middle of next year.

In recent days, the market-based odds of a rate increase at the Fed's meeting in June 2022 jumped to roughly 60 percent, according to data from CME. It was about 15 percent at the start of the month.

Investors are watching the Fed's moves closely. The bond-buying programs and low interest rates have been a huge boon to the stock market; the S&P 500 is up more than 100 percent since they began, including about a 22 percent gain this year.

But some on Wall Street think the markets could accept a methodical shift from the Fed on interest rates, especially if it means keeping inflation in check.

"I have a view that as long as you move away from emergency conditions in a deliberate manner, the markets actually will like that and growth can continue," said Rick Rieder, head of the global allocation investment team at the money management firm BlackRock.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Sudan PM was held at coup general's home
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/world/africa/sudan-coup-protests.html
GIST	<p>A day after he seized power in Sudan, the country's top general said on Tuesday that he had detained the civilian prime minister in his own home, and defended the coup as necessary for stability — even as large crowds of protesters flooded the streets of the capital and other major cities to resist the military takeover.</p> <p>"He is in my own residence," Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who led the coup, said in a news conference in the capital, Khartoum. "We had feared for his life. That's why we took him to safe custody," he added.</p> <p>The military's capture of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and other civilian government ministers on Monday derailed a transition to civilian rule and plunged Sudan back into fear and uncertainty after a two-year period of tenuous hope.</p> <p>Late Tuesday evening, two government officials who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the matter said that the prime minister had been allowed to return to his own home, though he remained under house arrest.</p>

The general and the prime minister had been the top leaders of a military-civilian power-sharing government set up in 2019 that was expected to lead the country until elections could be held in 2022.

General al-Burhan accused political factions of inciting against the country's armed forces and said the military had seized power to avoid an all-out "civil war." But the coup came just weeks before he was supposed to surrender his position to a civilian — which would have put Sudan under full civilian control for the first time since 1989.

When the general seized power on Monday, and the prime minister refused to issue a statement in support of the coup, the prime minister was arrested along with his wife, the information ministry said. General al-Burhan insisted on Tuesday, however, "He was not kidnapped. He was not assaulted or tortured."

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke with Mr. Hamdok after he was released to his home, according to the U.S. State Department. Mr. Blinken "welcomed the prime minister's release from custody and reiterated his call on Sudanese military forces to release all civilian leaders in detention and to ensure their safety," the statement said.

At least four people were killed and more than 80 injured on Monday when security forces fired on protesters who gathered outside the army headquarters in Khartoum, according to the Sudan Doctors' Committee. Reports by news agencies of a higher death toll could not be confirmed.

Despite the danger, protests continued on Tuesday, demonstrating the resolve of many Sudanese to resist rather than return to military-led, authoritarian rule, even as there is frustration over growing economic hardships. Pro-democracy groups called for civil disobedience to demonstrate against the military seizure of power, and in response, schools, shops and banks closed their doors on Tuesday.

In the hours before and after General Burhan's news conference, demonstrators demanding a return to civilian rule and the release of the detained officials burned tires and barricaded roads with large bricks and stones in the capital, Khartoum and at least 14 other cities. Stores and businesses remained largely closed in observance of the call for civil disobedience, while mosque loudspeakers broadcast calls for people to join the revolution.

The scenes have been reminiscent of 2019, when thousands of protesters took to the streets in a revolt that ultimately ended three decades of dictatorship under Omar Hassan al-Bashir.

General Burhan said on Tuesday the military was committed to a transfer of power following elections in 2023 — a pledge met with deep skepticism by many Sudanese after the events of Monday.

"The coup in Sudan is unlikely to pass off smoothly," said Murithi Mutiga, the project director for the Horn of Africa at the International Crisis Group. "Memories of the corruption, repression and general misrule in the al-Bashir years are too fresh in the minds of many Sudanese for them to accede without resistance to a return to the old order."

Three Western diplomats said on Tuesday there was a split inside the military between senior generals and officers who did not want to return to the days of shooting at their own people and those who were in favor of the military coup.

The internet remained significantly disrupted, according to Alp Toker, director of the internet monitoring organization NetBlocks. General al-Burhan said on Tuesday that internet services would resume gradually. Sudan's Civil Aviation Authority announced that all flights to Khartoum International Airport were suspended until Saturday.

"For many Sudanese, the digital blackout will evoke painful memories and a sense of fear that hard-won freedoms can be easily lost," Mr. Toker said.

The military takeover was condemned internationally, with the U.N. Security Council expected to discuss the issue in a closed-door emergency meeting on Tuesday afternoon.

Sudanese nationals abroad and diaspora groups have also been protesting in front of embassies in cities such as London and Paris.

The United States froze \$700 million in direct assistance to Sudan's government on Monday, and demanded that the detained civilian leaders be released and the transitional government restored. The European Union threatened on Tuesday that it, too, could withdraw financial support if "the situation is not reversed immediately."

Jake Sullivan, the U.S. national security adviser, said on Tuesday that the Biden administration was in contact with other Arab countries about the military takeover and was looking at "full range of economic tools" to deal with the coup.

Some of the protesters who had gathered on Monday outside the army headquarters, where the shooting took place, said the military pursued them as they retreated, prompting them to put up roadblocks in their areas.

"We went back to our neighborhoods but the military followed us," said Iman Ahmed, a protester who said she saw dozens of wounded people at the military headquarters. "We put up barricades to stop their vehicles from entering."

The government's Culture and Information Ministry said on Monday in Facebook posts that workers at both federal and state government offices, central bank employees and members of the Khartoum tax workers' union, among others, would boycott work on Tuesday.

Doctors in parts of the country announced that they had withdrawn from military hospitals and would only provide emergency services inside government hospitals. The Sudanese Professionals Association, an umbrella group of trade unions, said that pharmacies in Khartoum would take part in the civil disobedience, except to deal with emergencies, "until the defeat of the putschists."

The group had said earlier that military officers had prevented employees from the central blood bank from preparing blood for injured civilians.

On Tuesday, there was a call from the Sudanese Laboratories Committee for people to donate blood wherever they could.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 United: unvaccinated workers cost millions
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/united-airlines-lawsuit-pilots-texas-judge/
GIST	<p>United Airlines says it is paying nearly \$3 million a month to keep hundreds of employees, including some pilots, who refuse to get vaccinated against COVID-19 on paid leave.</p> <p>The Chicago-based carrier disclosed in legal documents that it is spending \$1.4 million every two weeks in leave benefits on workers who haven't complied with the company's vaccine mandate. Some unvaccinated employees at United are challenging the company's vaccination policy in court.</p> <p>United was the first major airline to require vaccinations for all employees. The company said 99.7% of its roughly 67,000 employees have complied with the mandate. But 232 workers have not taken the vaccine and now face termination, United CEO Scott Kirby told CBS Mornings earlier this month.</p> <p>United's legal battle reflects the broader push by employers to get their workers vaccinated against the virus, and the ensuing pushback by some people. Thousands of workers are either quitting or being fired for refusing to take the vaccine. Many such conflicts have taken place quietly and behind closed doors,</p>

	<p>while others have played out in public, such as the exit of ESPN reporter Allison Williams and Washington State University's decision to fire football coach Nick Rolovich for refusing to get vaccinated.</p> <p>At United, several unvaccinated employees filed a lawsuit against the company last month and are now collecting extended leave benefits until the matter shakes out in court. In response to the suit, U.S. District Court Judge Mark Pittman of Texas placed a temporary restraining order on United barring it from implementing its vaccine mandate.</p> <p>At issue are those unvaccinated employees who said they have medical or religious reasons that prevent them from receiving the vaccine. Many airlines allow their employees to opt out of a vaccine mandate, but United does not offer such leeway.</p> <p>Pittman last week denied United's request to lift the restraining order and extended it to November 8.</p> <p>Lawyers representing the employees say it's unfair to make those workers choose between the vaccination or keeping their job. The lawsuit is about "the fact is that some people have sincere religious objections to the COVID-19 vaccine, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires employers to respect and accommodate those beliefs," attorney Mark Paoletta said in a statement last month.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Vietnam vaccinates kids to reopen schools
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/vietnam-starts-vaccinating-kids-effort-reopen-schools-80807572
GIST	<p>HANOI, Vietnam -- Vietnam on Wednesday started to vaccinate children as part of an effort to reopen schools after more than half a year of closures due to COVID-19.</p> <p>About 1,500 teenagers between 16 and 17 years old in Ho Chi Minh City in southern Vietnam were among the first to receive jabs before the inoculation program is rolled out nationwide in November, the health ministry said on its website.</p> <p>During the first phase, Vietnam has only approved the Pfizer vaccine for children. Parents or guardians must sign a consent form for their children to be vaccinated, the report said.</p> <p>"Vaccination safety for children is the top priority," health minister Nguyen Thanh Long said during a meeting on Tuesday ahead of the launch.</p> <p>Last week, the ministry approved vaccinations for children between 12 and 17 years old, with older teens in more populated cities receiving priority for the first doses. There are about 14 million Vietnamese children in that age range.</p> <p>According to the report, children will be vaccinated at their schools and those who do not attend school will be vaccinated at pediatric hospitals.</p> <p>About 55% of Vietnam's 98 million people have received COVID-19 vaccine jabs, but only half of them have been fully vaccinated with both doses.</p> <p>Vietnam closed schools and education institutions in May when an outbreak fueled by the delta variant spread across the country. No date has been set for reopening schools, but the government is aiming for early 2022.</p> <p>Southern provinces were the worst hit by the virus, with Ho Chi Minh City as the epicenter. About 800,000 people were infected and 20,000 died in less than four months as the outbreak surged.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Migrant caravan pushes thru Mexico
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/familiar-drive-pushes-migrant-caravan-mexico-80801954

GIST

HUIXTLA, Mexico -- After three days of walking along a scorching highway in southern Mexico, a couple thousand migrants decided to rest here Tuesday, receive medical attention for badly blistered feet, wash clothing in the river and doze in any shade they could find.

Nitza Maldonado and Omar Rodríguez sprawled on the sidewalk beside a local church with their 6-year-old son. The Honduran family had paid a smuggler \$12,000 last year to get to the United States, but they were nabbed in Texas and deported.

Due to the pandemic, they had lost their jobs there — she as an assistant at a law firm and he as a worker in a laundry. Back in Honduras, they faced unemployment and debts from their failed attempt to migrate so they decided to leave again on their own.

Sleeping on the ground and sometimes eating only one meal a day, they decided the risks of rough handling or deportation by Mexican authorities were worth joining the large group effort to walk north.

“You have to migrate because in our country there’s a lot of unemployment, there’s no education,” Maldonado said. “That’s why this is happening to us.”

It has been years since Mexican authorities allowed such a large group of migrants to walk out of the southern state of Chiapas. Recent smaller attempts were dissolved, sometimes with excessive force, by National Guard troops and immigration agents after the migrants tired.

On Tuesday, there was still no visible move to break up the group. Including hundreds of children, the group has been moving slowly, covering just 25 miles (41 kilometers) in three days.

Migrants took advantage of the pause to charge phones, dry out from Monday's rain and cool off in the river.

Dayana Flores, 17, and her 20-year-old husband Kevin Ortiz, left Honduras four months ago when their baby was only 20 days old. Since then they’ve been in the southern Mexican city of Tapachula going regularly to Mexico’s asylum office, lining up before dawn as they attempted to get legal status, but nothing seemed to advance.

“Better to run the risk, maybe one can make it (to the U.S.), than to be there caged without work, without a place to work, without food, without anything,” Flores said.

Others spoke of similar frustration with the slow pace of Mexico’s asylum office.

Rosibel Maldonado said she waited the 45 working days that the agency said it would take to process her asylum application, but never heard anything, so she left.

Not all said they were trying to make it to the U.S. Mexico has seen the number of asylum applications it receives skyrocket in recent years. Through September, Mexico had received 90,000 applications, more than two-thirds of them in the Tapachula office.

While the government has tried to contain migrants to southern Mexico, far from the U.S. border, many seek to reach northern cities where there are far more employment opportunities than in the economically depressed south.

Carlos Fuentes was traveling with his wife and six children. They want to make it to the northern city of Monterrey.

Fuentes spent six years in the U.S. before being deported a decade ago. He said gang members tried to recruit his kids — the boys to sell drugs, the girls as girlfriends — so they had to leave.

	“We’re out of money and so we decided to come with the caravan and thank God they haven’t detained us,” he said.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Haiti difficult relationship: gangs, business
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/haiti-difficult-relationship-gangs-business-80806353
GIST	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Youri Mevs knew that the call was coming, and she was terrified.</p> <p>Mevs is a member of one of the richest families in Haiti; she owns Shodecosa, Haiti’s largest industrial park, which warehouses 93 percent of the nation’s imported food. Like everyone else, she has watched with despair as her country descended into chaos since the assassination of President Jovenel Moise.</p> <p>Her office got the call one early morning in August. It was from Jimmy Cherizier -- aka Barbecue, a former policeman who leads the G9 gang coalition which controls the coastal strip of Port-au-Prince. Most of Haiti’s food and gasoline flows through his domain, and he can stop it with a single word.</p> <p>Barbecue’s demand: \$500,000 a month, a “war chest” he claimed would be used to buy food for the hungry and fight for democracy.</p> <p>Pay the price, no problems. Refuse, and Shodecosa would be ransacked, and the gangs also would block the roads around the port terminal owned by the Mevs family.</p> <p>Mevs knew the threat was credible. Three neighboring warehouses were looted in June. It came down to math: “How much do we make? Can we afford it?” The answer was no.</p> <p>Should she fight back? Again, no. “We are not going to shoot a gun to defend a bag of rice.”</p> <p>There was nowhere to turn for help. In Haiti, there is no functioning government. For decades, the country was ruled by political strongmen supported by armed gangs; with Moise’s killing, the state collapsed and the gangs were unbound.</p> <p>Having lost their meal ticket — the government — the gangs have become independent predators. While some turned to kidnapping, like those who captured 17 missionaries and their relatives, Barbecue’s men took control of the port district, gaining a stranglehold on the country’s economy.</p> <p>Mevs is far from poor. She is not starving, not struggling for survival -- in so many ways, she is unlike the migrants who are fleeing Haiti’s misery. Like others of her caste, she traces her roots to ancestors who came to Haiti generations ago from Europe and the Middle East and built fortunes.</p> <p>But like those emigrants, she and others among Haiti’s wealthy elite have few illusions about life in Haiti. She wants her daughters to join those families moving abroad while the future of the country is settled. If life does not improve, she may have to sell what she owns and join them.</p> <p>In the meantime, she vows to stand up and fight the political battle to rebuild the government and country. She accepts that the gangs are part of the Haitian eco-system, something to be dealt with constantly as she struggles to keep her business going.</p> <p>But Barbecue and his gang are immensely powerful. Her money, her contacts with rival gangs, her political connections -- all may be to no avail.</p> <hr/> <p>On a hot October morning, Barbecue -- the name comes from his mother’s occupation, selling food at a street stall -- receives reporters in his stronghold of Bellecour-Cité Soleil, a wretched neighborhood of tin shacks without water, electricity or any basic services.</p>

Barbecue unboxes two new, American-made AK rifles with ammunition. Then surrounded by a dozen young, hooded men armed and dressed in brightly colored T-shirts and sneakers, he walks to the perimeter wall that encloses Terminal Varreux, the port owned by the Mevs family.

No, he insists. He did not ask for money from the Mevs in exchange for not looting their properties. "If I did that, they would have killed me by now," he says.

Barbecue fancies himself a man of the people and an enemy of the elite. He speaks blithely of a possible civil war of the poor against the rich and powerful "foreign" families who own Haiti.

This, he says, is what he believes: "Water, housing, school, university, security for all and not only for the 5% who have lighter skin" -- the rich families like the Mevs.

"I have hatred for those people, every time we look at them we can say that there are two Haitis. We have to put an end to the system of dispossession."

He mingles with the people of Bellecour-Cité Soleil, trying to present himself as not a gangster but as a revolutionary leader fighting for social change. He is not very successful.

Carrying a gun, he enters shacks without permission and does not say hello to the people living there before launching into diatribes about their living conditions. Generally, the occupants look down in silence, extras in a movie they played no part in producing.

Barbecue gestures to a teenager who walks behind him. The youth pulls a wad of bills from his back pocket and gives some to Barbecue; he, in turn, hands the money to the woman of the house.

"Their position is that of mental slaves, they have not always understood the struggle," he says.

He says he can do little more for slum dwellers. And despite all appearances, he says he is not positioning himself for a political career. He claims not to have any political affiliation or party and says he does not see himself "as a candidate in a system that I see as corrupt."

Mevs and others dismiss nearly everything Barbecue says as posturing -- especially his claims that he is not corrupt but an enemy of corruption.

He has been accused -- by the United Nations and other international organizations -- of participation in three massacres between 2018 and 2020.

The bloodbaths, said to have been sponsored by high-ranking officials in the Moïse administration, left more than 200 people dead. Women were gang-raped, and entire neighborhoods were burned, displacing thousands.

Barbecue's extortion is brazen. And sometimes, a payoff is not enough to guarantee protection.

For 20 years, Giovanni Saleh, 44, rented a warehouse from the Mevs. It was located halfway between Cité Soleil and Shodecosa, the Mevs' industrial park.

Saleh can offer no explanation for what happened starting on the morning of June 6. He had complied with the rules. He had, he says, a "stable and correct" relationship with the gang.

"The last day I went to the warehouse I was preparing the food I used to leave for the gang every two weeks" -- cans of tomatoes, cartons of spaghetti, oil, beans, 20 sacks of rice. "I collaborated with them with food and some money on a regular basis."

Saleh says he received a call from Merci Dieu, a member of Barbecue's gang coalition: "We are going to block the area for a couple of days to ask for money from the government and trucks leaving the port, so come now and take whatever you need and then stay away for some days."

Two days later, a friend called Saleh to tell him that there were rumors of an attack against his warehouse. He called security, no answer. He checked the cameras online and they were off. He called police, called everyone he knew. Nobody would do anything.

Saleh lost \$3.5 million in goods over three days, as thousands of people directed by Barbecue and a colleague disassembled his warehouse box by box, bag by bag, shelf by shelf. Drone footage he took shows a constant and orderly flow of looters entering the warehouse from two directions.

Guards told him later that armed men fronting a mob had come to the door and knocked.

"Who would shoot? No one would shoot," Saleh said. "They opened the doors and left."

Saleh has sent his wife and two kids to Santo Domingo, and wants to join them. But for now he is rebuilding his business. He has taken out loans to reopen in the Mevs' industrial park.

Youri Mevs "may be making the same mistake I made. I thought that by dealing with them, they would protect me, but they didn't," he said. "They charge you, one way or the other, for protection, but instead of protecting you against other gangs or even the police, they turn against you."

Magalie Dresse lives in an elegant home in the heart of Port-au-Prince, with a well-tended garden where she does yoga in the morning. "I need the strength to go out there and handle what I'm going to find, which is not going to be positive."

Since 2004, her car has been attacked; she has survived two kidnapping attempts; the government expropriated some of her properties; and her factory was damaged by arson in riots, costing her \$400,000 in a single day.

And then there are the gangs. "At one point," she says, "we've had cash at home during the weekends in case a friend needed it for a ransom and banks were closed."

Dresse's business sends about 50 containers of art to the United States each year. But before they arrive at the port, they must pass through gang-controlled areas.

"They can open them, check if there is something they want or even set them on fire," she says. So "we pay the police, then sometimes we have to pay a gang because they can barricade the route."

Later, she acknowledges that "some businesses" -- not hers -- "decide to have their own gangs on payroll. And that choice is the story of many companies in Haiti."

At the end of the day, she holds a cocktail party for friends and associates, and they swap stories about the impossibility of business life in a gangster nation.

"If you have \$5 million worth of merchandise to unload and deliver, \$50,000 (in bribes) is something you can deal with," says Geoffrey Handal, entrepreneur in the shipping industry and former president of the Franco-Haitian Chamber of Commerce.

But the uncertainty -- the possibility that Barbecue might close the port for three days, or block trucks -- is impossible to live with.

Political use of gangs in Haiti dates back to the 1960s, when Francois Duvalier created the Tonton Macute, a civil force that spread terror in the population for decades. When deposed president Jean-Bertrand Aristide ruled early in this century, he also created his own armed gang, the “chimères,” based in Cité Soleil.

Moise and his predecessor, Michel Martelly, used gangs for hire to control the coastal areas where a large number of votes were concentrated.

When Moise was assassinated, the gangs decided there was no need to serve as middlemen for politicians anymore. “Why would they accept being used if they could manage the business?” Handal asks.

Barbecue’s revolutionary rhetoric is empty, he says. “If someone offers Barbecue 5% more than what he is making right now, he will change allegiances immediately.”

For Handal, the issue is simple: How low must businesspeople stoop to succeed in a gangster nation? “Do you want to become one of them? Are you willing to have blood on your hands?”

Instead, Dresse says the solution is citizenship.

“We need people like us involved in politics with a long-term approach,” she says. “We need to create a new political party.”

Youri Mevs does not pay the \$500,000 extortion. She orders one of her managers to supply some of Barbecue’s rivals: “Get them corn flakes, milk, pasta, tomato and soap.” How much? “\$5,000.”

She describes it as “looking for ways of compensating for the non-aggression.” She does not believe in cash donations because “they will use them to buy ammunition,” so she donates goods that cannot be used “to hunt me or people like me.”

She has staked her future on the political system, one with overtones of the failed past.

When Moise’s government began to fall apart, she decided she could no longer talk about “they” and “them” when she referred to her own country: “Because I belong to the caste, I know what the caste has done to this country and what the country is doing to my caste.”

In 2016 she met Youri Latortue, a veteran politician who was then president of the Senate. Latortue asked her to help with a report about a corruption scheme during Martelly’s administration.

In 2018 she became secretary general of Latortue’s party, AAA, which has led the opposition against Martelly and Moise since the 2016 elections. Now Latortue is “waiting for the party nomination” and Mevs is running his campaign.

Latortue has been accused of a lot in the past, from corruption to running gangs. He denies it all, and has never been formally accused. He says he wants to break with the Haitian tradition of strongmen and militias; that can only happen, he says, “with a strong state, a strong public force, and institutions that guarantee the functioning of the state.”

Latortue and Mevs have proposed a special police unit, trained by international experts, to fight the gangs. And they want to put Barbecue behind bars.

But in the meantime, Mevs has to deal with him.

	<p>At the AAA headquarters, a truck awaits to be loaded with the food she ordered that morning. This is how she rationalizes the payoff: “It is a donation from the political party to a neighborhood. ... It is populism, but people are hungry. There is nothing wrong in giving them food.”</p> <p>Even if so, Latortue cannot be tied publicly to the shipment. “Some people could accuse me of giving them weapons because the place is at war,” he explains.</p> <p>The two delivery men are tied to their phones, discussing the route. There are reports of gunfights, it is going to be a long route of discussions and shouts and detours along the way to the “backdoor entrance” of a barricaded front line.</p> <p>The truck stops three times, on three parallel streets. Every corner is guarded by a dozen young men. They unload the truck into a house, a school, a party office.</p> <p>Behind them, on empty streets, gunshots ring out and armed young men stand guard at a barricade. They call themselves a self-defense group. They are simply one of Port-Au-Prince's gangs.</p>
Return to Top	

Cyber Awareness

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Online portal to prove vaccination faulty
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/tech/states-online-portal-to-prove-covid-vaccination-status
GIST	<p>Many private sector providers are being compelled to verify the COVID-19 vaccination status of their customers, and some of them are encountering issues providing that proof digitally.</p> <p>Its a situation that hits home with Jared, who declined to provide his last name.</p> <p>“The country I’m traveling to requires a digital proof of vaccination in order to enter the country,” he said, adding that he and colleagues were preparing for an international trip but encountered issues while trying to prove his vaccination status. “These card things are not enough to enter that country. You have to have something that’s backed up by a health care provider.”</p> <p>But when Jared tried to get his digital QR code through MyIR, which is how Washington state residents can obtain digital proof of their vaccination status, he saw a statement on the website saying that because they aren’t recognized by a global health data network, called CommonTrust, they had to deactivate the QR codes.</p> <p>The left Jared unable to show his status via the electronic portal.</p> <p>Some people have reported issues accessing their online vaccination records.</p> <p>“If you’re traveling outside (the country) is really where the problems begin,” he said.</p> <p>But others told KOMO News that the problems don't end there.</p> <p>“There should be a way for this to be smoother and more seamless,” said Dr. Katharine Lamperti, a Seattle-area physician who obtained her vaccination through her employer. She has been trying for quite some time to access her digital proof of vaccination, but her records can't be found. “If I as a physician am having a hard time, I can just imagine how hard it is for a lot of other families.”</p> <p>State health department officials are recommending that people call 833-VAX-HELP, which the department said has specialists ready to help answer questions.</p>

	<p>But for people like James Cameron, a Seattle resident who also can't access his online records, a feeling of helplessness has set in.</p> <p>"Clearly, they have issues they have not addressed," he said.</p> <p>According to MyIR's statement regarding the QR codes, they're working to get those QR codes back in operation. They say people should still have the ability to access copies of their official vaccination records even if they can't get a QR code right now.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 Anonymity no more? Age checks on web
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/27/technology/internet-age-check-proof.html
GIST	<p>Richard Errington clicked to stream a science-fiction film from his home in Britain last month when YouTube carded him.</p> <p>The site said Mr. Errington, who is over 50, needed to prove he was old enough to watch "Space Is the Place," a 1974 movie starring the jazz musician Sun Ra. He had three options: Enter his credit card information, upload a photo identification like a passport or skip the video.</p> <p>"I decided that it wasn't worth the stress," he said.</p> <p>In response to mounting pressure from activists, parents and regulators who believe tech companies haven't done enough to protect children online, businesses and governments around the globe are placing major parts of the internet behind stricter digital age checks.</p> <p>People in Japan must provide a document proving their age to use the dating app Tinder. The popular game Roblox requires players to upload a form of government identification — and a selfie to prove the ID belongs to them — if they want access to a voice chat feature. Laws in Germany and France require pornography websites to check visitors' ages.</p> <p>The changes, which have picked up speed over the last two years, could upend one of the internet's central traits: the ability to remain anonymous. Since the days of dial-up modems and AOL chat rooms, people could traverse huge swaths of the web without divulging any personal details. Many people created an online persona entirely separate from their offline one.</p> <p>But the experience of consuming content and communicating online is increasingly less like an anonymous public square and more like going to the bank, with measures to prove that you are who you say you are. This month, lawmakers in Washington, which has lagged other world capitals in regulating tech companies, called for new rules to protect young people after a former Facebook employee said the company knew its products harmed some teenagers. They repeated those calls on Tuesday in a hearing with executives from YouTube, TikTok and the parent company of Snapchat.</p> <p>Critics of the age checks say that in the name of keeping people safe, they could endanger user privacy, dampen free expression and hurt communities that benefit from anonymity online. Authoritarian governments have used protecting children as an argument for limiting online speech: China barred websites this summer from ranking celebrities by popularity as part of a larger crackdown on what it says are the pernicious effects of celebrity culture on young people.</p> <p>"Are we going to start seeing more age verification? Of course," said Hany Farid, a professor of engineering and computer science at the University of California, Berkeley, who has called for more child safety measures. "Because there is more pressure, there's more awareness now, on how these technologies are harming kids."</p> <p>But, Mr. Farid said, regulators and companies need to proceed with caution. "We don't want the solution to be more harmful than the problem," he said.</p>

Many websites have long required visitors to submit their birth date to see content meant only for adults. But visitors could usually do so without showing any evidence of their age.

That is no longer enough for some regulators. New child-protection guidelines in Britain [say some websites](#) need to take additional steps to verify their users' ages when the services collect sensitive user data.

An update to the European Union's rules for video and audio services requires sites to protect minors, which may include checking users' ages. In response to the change, Google said last year that it would ask some users of YouTube, which it owns, for their identification documents or credit card details before they could watch adults-only videos. A spokeswoman for Google pointed to an [August blog post](#) where the company said it was "looking at ways to develop consistent product experiences and user controls for kids and teens globally" as regulators applied new rules in different countries.

Facebook is exploring similar options. The company said [in a July blog post](#) that it was developing programs to look for signs that users were lying about their age, like spotting when someone who claims to be 21 gets messages about her quinceañera. But when "we do feel we need more information, we're developing a menu of options for someone to prove their age," Pavni Diwanji, the company's vice president of youth products, said in the post. Facebook later said one of the options would involve providing identification documents.

Many of the new age verification efforts require users to submit government-issued identification or credit cards information. But other companies are using, or considering, other options, like software that scans a user's face to approximate the person's age.

Critics of the checks worry that the requirement will force users to give sensitive information to websites with limited resources to prevent hacks. Outside companies that offer age checks would be vulnerable, too.

"Either way, that's still a treasure trove of data that's exploitable," said Daly Barnett, a staff technologist at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, an online privacy and free speech advocacy group.

Many companies, and governments, say they are putting measures in place to address privacy concerns, like limits on how long data is stored. The British privacy regulator overseeing the new child protection code said this month that websites should deploy the most aggressive age checks — like requiring government identification — only when the potential risk to a child was equally significant.

While sorting out which age check method to use, [Roblox](#), the game company, showed prototypes to 10 teenage players, said Chris Aston Chen, a senior product manager at the company.

One possible method required players to get on a video call, while another checked government databases. Mr. Chen said the players gravitated toward using government IDs, an option they trusted and thought was convenient. (Roblox's chief product officer [is a board member](#) of The New York Times Company.)

The technology will also make it easier for Roblox to keep out players it has barred because of inappropriate conduct in the voice chat feature. If those players log back in using a new account but try to verify their age using the same government document, they'll be locked out.

"I do imagine that over the next few years that there will be an increased level of comfort and expectation, almost, to provide some sort of personal verification on a platform for the greater good," Mr. Chen said.

Some services are resisting the checks. Twitter allows users to disclose their birth date but does not require it. If users want to view adult content — nudity is prevalent on the service — they must click through a warning but don't have to prove they are 18 or older.

"At the heart of Twitter is the belief that there's a huge value to the public conversation of people being able to speak pseudonymously to the world," said Nick Pickles, a senior director of global public policy

strategy at Twitter, “and also not requiring a significant amount of personal information to be provided before you can use online services.”

The shift might be especially troublesome for some people, critics said. Posts related to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are more likely to be mistakenly marked as “adult” content even if they are not overtly sexual, for example, said Ms. Barnett of the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

Automatic facial analysis is also often less accurate for female faces or people with darker skin. And critics worry that strict age checks could make life more difficult for people who rely on anonymity online, like sex workers and political dissidents.

Perhaps no part of the web has more new age check requirements than pornography sites, which are often at the leading edge of technology trends. In addition to Germany and France, governments including Poland, the Philippines and Canada have considered proposals that would require pornography sites to check ages.

“The internet was created by adults, for adults,” said Julie Inman Grant, who runs Australia’s Office of the eSafety Commissioner and has been developing age-check guidelines. “And I think one of the key challenges for us is to come up with a system that proves a child is a child sitting behind a keyboard.”

It is unclear how internet users will respond to the increasingly common age checks.

For months, YouTube explained to frustrated users on Twitter that it was demanding government IDs because of new regulations.

“I pay for youtube music, yet it wants me to upload a copy of my ID so it can verify my age before it will let me play ‘in bloom’ by Nirvana,” [one user said](#). The user noted that he had first bought the track on cassette “when I was about 12, almost 30 years ago.”

“This is a rule applied to video sharing platforms in certain countries,” YouTube’s customer support account responded.

Mr. Errington in Britain said YouTube had asked him for a credit card when he tried to watch “Space Is the Place.” He doesn’t have one. And he said he felt uncomfortable uploading a photo ID.

“I wasn’t prepared to give out this information,” he said. “So the Sun Ra video remains a mystery.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Interview with LockBit
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/an-interview-with-lockbit-the-risk-of-being-hacked-ourselves-is-always-present/
GIST	<p>Editor’s Note: Even though the LockBit ransomware group has been operating since September 2019, up until June this year, they have been a marginal player on the ransomware landscape.</p> <p>But following the deployment of a new version of their Ransomware-as-a-Service platform, called LockBit 2.0, and the sudden retirement of rival operations Darkside, Avaddon, and REvil, LockBit has become one of today’s largest RaaS platforms.</p> <p>Cybercriminal groups who previously rented ransomware payloads from other gangs seems to have flocked to the LockBit group over the summer, leading to a surge in attacks that caused Australian officials to issue a rare warning to local companies. Furthermore, stats collected by Recorded Future have shown that LockBit was, by a large margin, the most active ransomware group last month, in September, amounting for almost a third of all victims listed on ransomware leak sites.</p> <p>Following similar interviews with the administrators of the REvil and BlackMatter operations, the LockBit group has also agreed to talk to Recorded Future analyst and The Record writer Dmitry Smilyanets. The interview, translated from Russian by one of Recorded Future’s linguists, is available below.</p>

Dmitry Smilyanets: LockBit accounted for 34% of ransomware attacks that were reported in September. Tell us the secret of how you were able to conquer the market? Or are these numbers high just because most of your victims choose not to pay the ransom?

LockBitSupp: We haven't started to conquer the market yet. Now we are at the stage of developing and improving the software. The secret is very simple – an impeccable reputation – we are the only ones who have never scammed anyone or changed our brand. People trust us. Accordingly, the more affiliates, the more attacks. The LockBit Blog is just a small fraction of the companies that refused to pay the ransom. In the past 3 months, we have attacked over 700 companies. "[*My Phantom jet, with a white arrow on its wing, is gaining height.*](#)"

DS: Several countries are now discussing mandating that ransomware attacks be disclosed within days after they took place. With better stats on such attacks, your group is bound to stand out as one of the top threats today. Have you considered limiting your Ransomware as a Service (RaaS) program to avoid making too much noise with your attacks?

LB: Restrictions are created for people who want to live on a salary. We are not planning to introduce any restrictions. We only live once. Noise or not, any mistake in anonymity will destroy you. We do not care if the company discloses information about the attack, this is a purely private business of the company.

DS: What sets you apart from other groups is StealBit, tell me more about that malware.

LB: It is not enough to just encrypt the company, sometimes it is much more important to steal valuable information, for non-disclosure of which, the company is ready to pay more than for decryption. StealBit allows you to steal information as quickly and as simply as possible.

DS: You allow your affiliates to speak with their victims and accept payments directly. Has this model proven to be successful?

LB: There is no reason not to trust the affiliates. If a person is inclined to long-term cooperation, then they will never leave us. But the most important thing is maintaining an impeccable reputation, we cannot deceive our advertisers and steal their ransom, as Avvadon, Darkside, and REvil did.

DS: Do you believe the RaaS business model will sustain itself? How do you think it will change in the next 5 years?

LB: Competition will increase, the defense level of companies will rise, the wealth of our affiliates will increase too.

DS: Has the REvil disband over the summer played a role in your success? How many affiliates have joined your operation since Unknown disappeared?

LB: "Disband" of REvil does not affect our success in any way, 4 adverts came to us from them. It's easy to start an affiliate program, but to keep it open is a form of art.

DS: Do you know what really happened to Unknown?

LB: Nobody really knows, but I'm sure this is a classic exit scam, the same thing happened with Avvadon and Darkside. As soon as a large payment comes, the owner of this partnership program thinks about whether it is worth working further and risking his life, or is it better to exit right now and calmly spend the money for the rest of his life. In our case, such a case is impossible, since we fundamentally do not touch the money of our affiliates.

DS: You are very active on forums. Why did Exploit ban your account?

LB: For my signature. It is not very clear how cybercriminals can prohibit certain types of cybercrime, because, in fact, everyone on this forum is breaking the law. It turns out that conducting a pentest with post-payment for rich companies is prohibited, but stealing money from the bank cards of millions of individuals is allowed. It is also not very clear why the accounts of our competitors are not blocked who continue to buy and sell network accesses and look for pentesters on the forum Exploit. Perhaps this is some kind of selective policy – I admit that this may be the work of competitors and their dishonorable ways of dealing with the number one affiliate program in the world. "[*All this looks like some kind of bullshit, drugs are not allowed, but vodka is allowed*](#)". It's a shame, annoying, but okay.

DS: You mentioned that REvil and Hive are locking hospitals, do you?

LB: We do not attack hospitals, there were several cases when affiliates encrypted dental offices and nursing homes by mistake. We issued decryption keys free of charge.

DS: After the US and Russian presidents met in June everyone is looking for signs of change. And I see some change – the attacks have increased after a temporary slowdown in summer. Are these events related or did the affiliates just go for a long vacation?

LB: It's just a summer vacation. Like all people on the planet, no one wants to work in the summer, and even more so when you have millions of dollars. The meetings of the presidents will not affect anything, everyone who works seriously does not live in the United States or Russia. Personally, I live in China and feel completely safe.

DS: Some ransomware families prevent affiliates from attacking American companies and infrastructure. Do you have any special recommendations for your partners? What happens if your adverts deploy LockBit into critical infrastructure against your will?

LB: This has not happened yet. Not a single affiliate will go against our will, because we work only with trusted people who have a code of honor, each of our affiliates is responsible for their words and actions.

DS: Representatives from 30 countries met this month to discuss how to address ransomware attacks. Does this worry you in any way or do you believe this is just political grandstanding?

LB: They are just shaking the air. If you cannot defeat the enemy – lead him. Nobody canceled Newton's third law.

DS: Law enforcement agencies in several countries are now openly discussing hacking ransomware infrastructure to destroy stolen data and retrieve encryption keys. Does this worry you? Are your storage systems safe enough?

LB: This is one of the most effective methods to deal with us; no one is immune from hacking infrastructure with the help of 0-days. Using NSA hardware backdoors, it is possible to access any server on the planet. Therefore, the risk of being hacked is always present. At the moment, we are absolutely confident in the security system for storing decryption keys and stolen data, no competitor has any analogs. In addition to this, we have several backups of stolen company data on servers in various parts of the world, as well as encrypted offline backups held by trusted parties who receive a salary for safekeeping the data.

DS: The US government said it would go hard after cryptocurrency services that have helped ransomware groups launder funds. Do you anticipate this being a problem for you and the ransomware landscape in the future, or do you have other avenues of laundering funds?

LB: "[*Our path is difficult and far, my bitcoin rushes to the east*](#)". Show me at least one Chinese who will listen to what the US is telling him and not accept cryptocurrency from us when exchanging for cash dollars in Hong Kong.

DS: Are you ready to provide a decryption key for a company that was unable to raise funds in October for free?

LB: There are no companies without money, there are cunning companies that do not want to spend money on protecting their network, pay salaries for good system administrators, and then on a ransom. Perhaps we will make a free decrypt for one company "who could not raise funds", but in that case, the data of this company will remain in our great onion blog forever.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Emailing waves unsolicited QR codes
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/qr-code-phishing-scam/
GIST	Email fraudsters are seizing on the attention around the quick response codes that have become more common in restaurants and stores, leveraging QR codes try to steal users' Microsoft credentials and other data.

The latest campaign, [uncovered Tuesday by the email security company Abnormal](#), leveraged compromised email accounts in order to bypass standard security screening, then target nearly 200 email accounts between Sept. 15 and Oct. 13, 2021. The operation is the latest example of QR code-enabled phishing, with warnings about “QRishing” or “quishing” dating [back to at least 2012](#). The [Better Business Bureau warned](#) of such scams this summer, and the Army Criminal Investigation Command’s Major Cybercrime Unit [warned of potential problems in March](#).

An earlier version of the effort unveiled Tuesday embedded a malicious link behind what looked like a voicemail .WAV file. When that link was flagged by security screening services, attackers then switched to a QR code to redirect a victim to a credential harvesting page. The research did not identify the attackers behind the campaign.

A message below the QR code instructed the victim to scan it to “enable you to listen to encrypted Voicemail.” That then led to a fake Microsoft landing page that prompted the victim to enter their email and password in order to play the message.

Given the proliferation of QR codes as a means to enable hands-free ordering at restaurants, or required to validate vaccine status to enter certain venues in the COVID-19 era, the research serves as a reminder to think twice upon receiving an unsolicited QR code via email.

Rachelle Chouinard, a threat intelligence analyst at Abnormal, noted that the campaign was a bit clunky. It would require the victim to open the email on their computer and then use their phone’s camera to scan the QR code, which would then take them to the fake Microsoft login page to harvest a user’s credentials. “Does this actor expect them to go back and open it on their computer? Or send the email to the printer? Use another phone? At what point does the victim begin to suspect a scam?” Chouinard wrote.

The operation also faltered in that the email and credential harvesting page use the English language, but the reCAPTCHA is in German, potentially tipping victims off to the ruse.

In 2019, Virginia-based Cofense, an email security company, [uncovered a phishing campaign using QR codes](#) targeting some of its customers in France. In that case the attackers used QR codes to direct victims to a fake SharePoint landing page in order to read a shared document. Once there, users could log in with AOL, Microsoft, or other credentials to read the document. That campaign employed custom mobile pages in hopes to convince victims accessing the page on their phones that the request was legitimate.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Attackers hijack Craigslist emails; malware
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/attackers-hijack-craigslist-email-malware/175754/
GIST	<p>Manipulated Craigslist emails that abuse Microsoft OneDrive warn users that their ads contain ‘inappropriate content.’</p> <p>Musical instruments, motorcycle parts and now malware — Craigslist really does have it all.</p> <p>The Craigslist internal email system was hijacked by attackers this month to deliver convincing messages ultimately aimed avoiding Microsoft Office security controls to deliver malware.</p> <p>Sent from an authentic Craigslist IP address, the emails informed users that a published ad of theirs included inappropriate content and violated Craigslist’s terms and conditions, giving false instructions on how to avoid having their accounts deleted.</p> <p>Researchers at INKY discovered that the attackers manipulated the email’s HTML into a customized document with a malware-download link uploaded to a Microsoft OneDrive page. That page impersonated major brands like DocuSign, Norton and Microsoft.</p>

That also allowed the campaign to slip past standard email authentication.

“Since the URL to resolve the issue hosted a customized document placed on Microsoft OneDrive, it did not appear on any threat intelligence feed, allowing it to slip past most security vendors,” the researchers noted in [a posting](#) this week.

Abusing Anonymity

Craigslist is more than one gigantic yard sale. Its internal email system also lets interested buyers and sellers make contact anonymously. According to INKY’s report, threat actors were able to abuse that Craigslist email system and deliver authentic-looking phishing emails to users who were actively trying to sell something on the site.

That means victims were likely already fielding random inquiries from the Craigslist system, so the malicious emails simply blended in.

“Craigslist knows the identities of everyone, but unless a correspondent discloses details, they are perfectly anonymous to others on the system,” the INKY report said. “This situation suits phishers just fine. They can shoot their poisoned arrows from behind a local mail proxy. And shoot they did — a number of times in early October.”

The phishing emails looked like a notice from Craigslist that the user’s ad contained inappropriate content. The letter then threatened to ban the user from the platform unless they filled out a form, accessed by a malicious link.

Craigslist Phishing Emails Flag ‘Inappropriate Content’

“Out platform’s content publishing policy explicitly prohibits inappropriate content, your ad has received many red flags,” the email read. “A more detailed description of the problem is available in this form. It will be available 24 hours.”

Clicking on the “form” took users to [Microsoft OneDrive](#) document, INKY explained.

“It appears as if bad actors were able to manipulate the email’s HTML to create that button and link it to OneDrive,” the researchers wrote. “Hovering over the link revealed a Russian domain (myjino[.]ru).”

Clicking on the link initiated a .ZIP file download containing a macro-enabled spreadsheet that delivered malware. To get around Microsoft Office security controls and run the macros, the malicious documents prompted victims to click on a button to “Enable Editing” or “Enable Content,” INKY said.

“The spreadsheet impersonated DocuSign and also used Norton and Microsoft logos to imply that the file was safe,” according to the report. “DocuSign does not in fact have a service called ‘DocuSign Protect Service.’”

When the INKY team tried to get the malware to work it led to a 404 error message, which the team surmised is either a mistake by the attackers, or they had already been found out and taken down by the host.

Nonetheless, the INKY team said this Craigslist-hosted attack could have been used to install a remote access tool (RAT), launch a ransomware attack, implement a first-stage [implant like TrickBot](#), exfiltrate sensitive data or deploy a keylogger.

INKY advised Craigslist users to be on the lookout for these kinds of attacks, and added that any emails that seem unusual should be viewed as potentially malicious.

“Another red flag is the mixing of platforms,” the analysts added. “It doesn’t make sense to resolve a Craigslist issue through a document uploaded to OneDrive.”

HEADLINE	10/26 Conti changing business model
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/as-fewer-victims-pay-ransoms-conti-gang-looks-to-sell-victim-data-to-buyers
GIST	<p>Conti is changing its business model. Rather than post leak data as a threat, Conti is now offering stolen data from victims who have not paid ransoms for sale to outside buyers. It may be the next evolution for ransomware gangs left with boatloads of unmonetized data after victims have become dramatically less likely to pay ransoms over just the past quarter.</p> <p>"In general, we're just seeing fewer people pay," said Allan Liska, a ransomware expert with Recorded Future. "And so whenever that happens, the ransomware actors sort of try and launch new ventures as far as 'how else can we coerce money out of people or monetize the data that was stolen.'"</p> <p>Conti's leak site is now checkered with offers to purchase data where leaks once would have been. That includes an American HVAC supplier, a European pharmaceutical and other firms.</p> <p>While the total dollar amount of ransoms has risen, the percentage of victims infected with ransomware paying those ransoms has declined. The law firm BakerHostetler, which has a significant cyber practice and tracks client trends, has seen a dramatic decline in the number of its clients paying ransoms.</p> <p>"In 2018 and 2019, over 50 percent [of our victimized clients paid a ransom]," said Ted Kobus, a BakerHostetler partner. "Last year, we averaged below 50 percent. This year, we're averaging below 30 percent."</p> <p>There may be a number of factors in play for the decline. In fact, with traditional extortion schemes, there would have to be.</p> <p>Ransomware operators often pursue multiple threats during an attack; they will encrypt files and threaten to leak data. A decline in paying means neither threat was threatening.</p> <p>On the network end, better preparation could be a factor. The insurer Corvus, for example, believes that is a key reason for a dramatic drop in the number of victimized clients paying any amount of ransom. Corvus takes an active role in ensuring clients have usable offsite backups, which it credits for the lower-than-average need to pay ransom to start with. But improving client backups appears to have further improved results. According to a report released last week, between the second and third quarter of 2021, victimized clients paying ransoms dropped by half, from 24 percent of clients to 12 percent.</p> <p>"What I get most excited about is we're starting to see that curve happen where the numbers are catching up to organizations who are investing in a more resilient solution to ensure that they can keep pace with the evolving threat landscape," said Jason Rebholz, CISO of Corvus.</p> <p>At the same time, said Liska and Kobus, ransomware actors may not be doing as good of a job getting to the most damaging data on a network. That could result from better network segmentation or the inexperience of new actors in the threat space. The latter may be manifesting in other ways, too, including failures in the exfiltration process.</p> <p>While leak posts are up, said Liska, they are not as far up as he would expect given the increase in attacks and decrease in payments. That could be the result of not getting the best files or it could be bureaucratic delays on the part of actors — a backlog of data being prepped for leaks (Liska said it can take some operators months) or hesitancy to leak files during negotiations.</p> <p>Conti is working unposted files and offers to sell data into its extortion pitch.</p> <p>A text box on the top of their page now warns victims who have not paid the ransom and do not see their data on the site "this does not mean that we forgot about you, it only means that data was sold and only therefore it did not publish in free access!"</p>

HEADLINE	10/26 State Dept. to form cyber bureau
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/state-department-to-form-cyber/
GIST	<p>The United States is planning to create a new government department that will deal with matters of digital policy and cybersecurity.</p> <p>On Monday, Secretary of State Tony Blinken announced plans for the State Department to launch a Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy, in an email to the department's workforce.</p> <p>In the email, Blinken reportedly stated: "This structure will provide us with greater leadership and accountability to drive the diplomatic agenda with the interagency and abroad and build on the extraordinary work that is already taking place across the Department."</p> <p>In addition to the bureau, the Biden administration reportedly plans to create the new position of cyber envoy that will be focused on critical and emerging technology.</p> <p>In a briefing held yesterday, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said: "Pending consultations with Congress, we plan to establish a Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy, led by a Senate-confirmed ambassador-at-large, which will focus on three key areas: international cyberspace security, international digital policy, and digital freedom."</p> <p>Price added that the creation of the bureau will "integrate the core security, economic, and values components" of the Biden administration's cyber agenda.</p> <p>"We also plan to establish a new special envoy for critical and emerging technology to lead the immediate technology diplomacy agenda with our allies, partners, and across the range of multilateral fora," said Price.</p> <p>A journalist at the briefing asked Price, "Didn't the previous administration try to set up the same kind of thing, and you guys put the kibosh on it?"</p> <p>Price replied: "So what the previous administration set up – what they proposed, I should say – was to create a bureau that would be responsible for the national security aspects of cyberspace security and security-related aspects of emerging technology.</p> <p>"The Cyberspace Security and Emerging Technology Bureau would have been placed under the undersecretary for arms control and international security. So, this is a very different structure."</p> <p>The journalist responded that "it sounds almost exactly the same to me, except that instead of reporting to the undersecretary this one is going to report to the deputy secretary."</p> <p>A formal announcement regarding the creation of the bureau and the envoy role is expected to be made on Wednesday by Secretary Blinken.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Iranian gas stations knocked out of service
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/iranian-gas-stations-out-of-service-after-distribution-network-hacked/
GIST	<p>Gas stations from the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC) have stopped working today due to a cyberattack that affected the entire distribution network.</p> <p>The incident has generated a string of hacks on electronic road billboards to show messages demanding an explanation or asking for fuel.</p>

The [NIOPDC](#) network has more than 3,500 stations across the country and has been supplying oil products for more than 80 years.

Hackers echo previous attack

An investigation is looking into the cause of the disruption and there is no public information about who did it at this moment but Iran is blaming a hostile country.

A clue, which could also be a false lead, is a message displayed on the machines reading “cyberattack 64411.”

The note is a reference to a [cyberattack in July](#) that disrupted Iran’s train service. The attackers also modified the railway message boards to say that hackers caused the trains to be delayed or canceled and displayed the phone number for the office of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Research from cybersecurity company SentinelOne revealed that Iran’s train station system was targeted with malware specifically built to delete data (file wiper) called Meteor that had not been seen before.

Today’s attack left some Iranians waiting for hours for the gas stations to open and were left without fuel.

According to media reports, the “cyberattack 64411” message appeared to customers that tried to get subsidized fuel at 5 cents a liter or 20 cents a gallon using government-issued cards.

As news spread about the NIOPDC distribution network being under attack, digital billboards in multiple cities in Iran started to show messages reading “Khamenei! Where’s our fuel?” and “Free fuel in Jamaran station.”

Some local media reports initially said that the gas station disruption was caused by a [technical malfunction](#) and [later noted](#) that the issue was due to a cyberattack.

According to BBC journalists [Shayan Sardarizadeh](#) and [Kian Sharifi](#), the Iranian state television confirmed the reports of a cyberattack hitting gas stations and Iran’s Supreme Council of Cyberspace believes the incident is state-sponsored, although it is early to say which country is behind it.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 NKorea turns to supply chain attacks
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/north-korea-s-lazarus-group-turns-to-supply-chain-attacks
GIST	<p>Recent activity by North Korea’s infamous Lazarus Group provides fresh evidence of the growing threat actor interest in using trusted IT supply chain vendors as entry points to enterprise networks.</p> <p>Security researchers from Kaspersky recently discovered two separate campaigns where the Lazarus Group infiltrated the network of an IT company — likely as part of a broader strategy to compromise its downstream customers.</p> <p>In one of the incidents, Lazarus Group gained access to a South Korean security software vendor’s network and abused the company’s software to deploy two remote access Trojans (RATs) called Blindingcan and Copperhedge on a South Korean think tank’s network. The US Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) last year had issued separate alerts — one in August and the other in May — warning of the Lazarus Group using the two RATs to maintain a presence on compromised networks.</p> <p>The second Lazarus supply chain attack recently observed by Kaspersky researchers involved an IT asset-monitoring product vendor based in Latvia. In this attack, the Lazarus Group once again deployed the Copperhedge backdoor on the technology provider’s network.</p>

"This was done in a careful multistage process using two layers of multiple [command and control] servers," says Ariel Jungheit, senior security researcher at Kaspersky. The attack resulted in the threat actors loading and executing the Copperhedge malware in-memory only.

But Jungheit says Kaspersky has been unable to confirm if Lazarus managed to compromise the asset management technology vendor's software products itself. Similarly, Kaspersky has not been able to determine if the Lazarus Group leveraged its access on the asset management software vendor's network to compromise any further victims.

"We did not have visibility into how Lazarus compromised the South Korean security software company nor the asset monitoring technology provider in Latvia," Jungheit says. "We take our findings at face value as an indicator of Lazarus' interest in developing supply chain capabilities."

The Lazarus Group — responsible for the WannaCry ransomware attack and numerous other malicious campaigns — is among a growing number of threat actors that have begun developing capabilities for exploiting vulnerabilities in the IT supply chain to target enterprises.

Just this week, for instance, Microsoft warned about Nobelium — the threat actor behind the SolarWinds breach — targeting [trusted cloud and IT service providers](#) in a dangerous new campaign to gain a foothold on their customer networks. Microsoft described the threat actor as having attacked more than 140 service providers since May and breaching 14 of them.

The group has been identified by the federal government [as Russia's SVR spy agency](#).

Growing Attacker Interest

Over the last quarter, [Kaspersky observed](#) at least two other threat actors — HoneyMyte and BountyGlad — adopting the same tack. HoneyMyte basically injected a backdoor into an installer package of a fingerprint scanner product that central government employees of a South Asian country are required to use to record attendance.

Kurt Baumgartner, principal security researcher at Kaspersky, says that it is very likely the threat actor did not directly target a specific vendor in this attack. "Instead, the attackers compromised the distribution server for the software itself, which was not run by the vendor" to distribute the Trojanized installer, he says.

In the case of BountyGlad, the attackers replaced the installer for a digital certificate management software client on the vendor's distribution server with a malicious downloader. When executed on a victim system, the downloader executed the legitimate installer as well as additional malicious code, Baumgartner says.

History of Supply Chain Hacks

Supply chain attacks such as these are certainly not new. In 2019, a threat actor called Barium broke into an automated software updated system at hardware maker Asus and used the access to distribute malware to customers of Asus systems. The malware — distributed as part of an operation referred to as [ShadowHammer](#) — ended up being executed on over 400,000 systems. In 2017, attackers compromised a software build system at Avast and used the company's [CCleaner software](#) to distribute malware.

While these attacks garnered considerable attention, it was the breach that SolarWinds disclosed last December that really focused attention on supply chain security as an issue of critical concern.

"If you consider the impact of supply chain attacks we've seen in recent years, it's not hard to see why an APT threat actor might find it an attractive approach," says David Emm, principal security researcher at Kaspersky. "Supply chain attacks constitute a breach in trust relationship between a supplier and companies downstream."

An attack that leverages a compromised supplier is effectively an insider attack, he says.

	<p>Emm says supply chain attacks are within the range of most threat actors because pulling off one involves the same modus operandi used in other attacks — including the use of social engineering or exploiting vulnerabilities in software.</p> <p>"The key difference, of course," he adds, "is that the target company then becomes a stepping stone into their customers' networks."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Brutal WordPress plugin bug: wipe sites
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/brutal-wordpress-plugin-bug-allows-subscribers-to-wipe-sites/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>A high severity security flaw found in a WordPress plugin with more than 8,000 active installs can let authenticated attackers reset and wipe vulnerable websites.</p> <p>The plugin in question, known as Hashthemes Demo Importer, is designed to help admins import demos for WordPress themes with a single, without dealing with installing any dependencies.</p> <p>The security bug would allow authenticated attackers to reset WordPress sites and delete almost all database content and uploaded media.</p> <p>Wordfence QA engineer and threat analyst Ram Gall explained that the plugin failed to properly perform nonce checks, leaking the AJAX nonce on vulnerable sites' admin dashboard for all users, "including low-privileged users such as subscribers."</p> <p>As a direct consequence of this bug, logged-in subscriber-level users could abuse it to wipe all the content on sites running unpatched versions of Hashthemes Demo Importer.</p> <p>"While most vulnerabilities can have destructive effects, it would be impossible to recover a site where this vulnerability was exploited unless it had been backed up," Gall added.</p> <p><i>Any logged-in user could trigger the hdi_install_demo AJAX function and provide a reset parameter set to true, resulting in the plugin running it's database_reset function. This function wiped the database by truncating every database table on the site except for wp_options, wp_users, and wp_usermeta. Once the database was wiped, the plugin would then run its clear_uploads function, which deleted every file and folder in wp-content/uploads. — Ram Gall</i></p> <p>Subscriber, one of the types of users who could wipe vulnerable sites, is a default WordPress user role (just as Contributor, Author, Editor, and Administrator) often enabled on WordPress sites to allow registered users to write comments on the website's comment section.</p> <p>They would typically only be able to edit their profile using the site's dashboard without access to other admin pages.</p> <p>While Wordfence reported the vulnerability the bug to the plugin's development team on August 25, 2021, the developers did not reply to the disclosure messages for almost a month.</p> <p>This prompted Wordfence to reach out to the WordPress plugins team on September 20, which led to the plugin's removal the same day and the release of a patch addressing the bug four days later, on September 24.</p> <p>However, Hashthemes Demo Importer's developer did not mention the 1.1.2 release or the update on the plugin's changelog page despite releasing a security update.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 DDoS attack campaign against Voipfone
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SOURCE	https://www.ispreview.co.uk/index.php/2021/10/voip-provider-voipfone-uk-knocked-out-by-ddos-attack-again.html?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Customers of Voipfone's UK broadband ISP and Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) service have signalled their frustration after the provider was knocked out yet again by a major Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) assault against their servers, which has been periodically impacting both them and Voip Unlimited since last month.</p> <p>DDoS attacks typically work by overloading a target server or end-user with masses of data requests from multiple internet-connected devices (often malware hijacked computers / botnets etc.), which can cause the intended target to crash or suffer significant performance problems until the bad traffic stops or can be mitigated (easier said than done with large-scale assaults).</p> <p>Sadly, DDoS attacks occur against UK ISPs all the time and are practically par-for-the-course in this business, but most can be mitigated and few are ever significant enough to disrupt connectivity for lots of end-users. However, the recent extortion-based DDoS attacks against Voipfone and Voip Unlimited have caused significant disruption for both operators and their customers since they started at the end of September (here and here).</p> <p>The latest incident started yesterday and promptly disrupted all of the operator's VoIP, broadband, fixed line phone and other connectivity services (Voipfone Status). <i>"We apologize for the disruption to our services, we are defending an extortion-based DDoS attack from overseas criminals,"</i> said Voipfone while making a vague reference to the ransomware gang (previously named as REvil). <i>"We continue to work on a fix for this issue,"</i> they added.</p> <p>Industry sources have informed ISPreview.co.uk that the ransomware gang involved now appear to be using their attacks against Voipfone and Voip Unlimited as an exemplar to threaten other VoIP providers with similar attacks, unless they agree to paying a protection-racket fee. Some operators have indicated that the fee being asked is 10 Bitcoins per year, which is today worth around £452K.</p> <p>We have asked the Comms Council UK (formerly ITSPA), which represents the United Kingdom's Unified Communications and VoIP phone industry, to comment on the situation and are awaiting their response. Both Ofcom and relevant parts of the security services (Police) are understood to be aware of the ongoing issues, although there's little the regulator can do to tackle the immediate issue. In addition, we note that Voip Unlimited's website is also still down today, although their own Service Status page reports no problems with their services.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Canada govt. email leak exposes Afghans
SOURCE	https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/afghan-data-breach-ircc-1.6224894?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>The names of several hundred vulnerable Afghans seeking refuge from the Taliban were recently leaked in emails sent in error by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), CBC News has learned.</p> <p>The Afghans in question fear reprisals from the Taliban, who took over the country in August. Some are in hiding because of past roles in the Afghan government, armed forces, judiciary, or as human rights or women's rights activists.</p> <p>One email seen by CBC News listed 200 names. Not only did names and emails appear but also, in some cases, faces could be seen.</p> <p>The risks of such a release are serious. It would only be necessary for the Taliban to see a single copy of the email to obtain all 200 names.</p> <p>IRCC has been writing to the people in question to apologize.</p>

In one such email, sent Friday, IRCC director of client experience says Anne Turmel says the person's information was leaked on Oct. 18 when a unit within the department "sent four emails to multiple clients simultaneously regarding the Afghanistan situation."

The email addresses of the Afghans went into the "to" field instead of the "BCC" field, Turmel wrote, and "consequently personal email addresses were shared with the recipients."

"Please note, that by the same means, we inadvertently sent you information on October 18, 2021 pertaining to other individuals."

Despite assurances by the Taliban that there would be no reprisals or revenge, rights groups have documented an effort to [track down and kill](#) some of their former enemies.

UN human rights commissioner Michelle Bachelet last month recounted "credible allegations of reprisal killings" of former security personnel and arbitrary detentions of former officials.

"In some cases, the officials were released, and in others, they were found dead," Bachelet told the UN Human Rights Council.

Fear for sister

CBC News spoke with one Afghan-Canadian man whose sister's name was leaked in one of the emails. Her face can also be seen by passing a cursor over her email address. She is currently in hiding in Afghanistan with young children. Her husband, an army officer, was executed by the Taliban earlier this year. She herself worked for Afghanistan's civilian government.

CBC News is protecting the family's identity for reasons of security.

"There were not that many people associated with the government or with foreigners," the man said. "Anyone who gets the email would have both names, and in many cases faces. Even an ordinary, regular person can just put the picture in Google Search and find the person through social media."

And the Taliban have much more than that, he said. "They have sophisticated technology, and they have the support of Pakistan."

Pakistan's ISI intelligence service is widely believed to work closely with the Taliban, despite official Pakistani denials.

"Of course I am worried most for my sister," he said, "but not only her. Some of these people may not even be aware of this, and I'm concerned for them too, just as a human being."

U.K. apologized for similar breach

Britain's Conservative government was already [forced to apologize](#) for a very similar data breach in September that revealed 250 names.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace told the House of Commons he was "angered" by the leak and ordered an official inquiry by the country's information commissioner. One civil servant was suspended.

"We are now working with [those Afghans] to provide security advice," he told the House. "It is an unacceptable level of service."

CBC News has confirmed the four emails sent in error went to different groups of addressees, amounting to several hundred people in total.

IRCC has not apologized publicly, but did in the email to those directly affected.

	<p>"I have taken this incident very seriously and am reviewing our current processes to prevent this situation from happening again," wrote Turmel.</p> <p>"I offer you our sincere apology for our mistake and our assurance that we will do everything possible to ensure that it is not repeated."</p> <p>She also asked all recipients to delete the emails.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 SquirrelWaffle leverages malspam
SOURCE	https://blog.talosintelligence.com/2021/10/squirrelwaffle-emerges.html?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</p> <p>Recently, a new threat, referred to as "SQUIRRELWAFFLE" is being spread more widely via spam campaigns, infecting systems with a new malware loader. This is a malware family that's been spread with increasing regularity and could become the next big player in the spam space.</p> <p>SQUIRRELWAFFLE provides threat actors with an initial foothold onto systems and their network environments that can then be used to facilitate further compromise or additional malware infections depending on how adversaries choose to attempt to monetize their access. In many cases, these infections are also being used to deliver and infect systems with other malware like Qakbot and the penetration-testing tool Cobalt Strike. Let's take a look at how this new threat operates and the volume and characteristics of the malicious email campaigns associated with it. Organizations should be aware of this threat, as it will likely persist across the threat landscape for the foreseeable future.</p> <p>EMAIL CAMPAIGNS</p> <p>The email threat landscape is constantly changing as new threats emerge or existing threats evolve over time. Over the past few years, Emotet has been one of the primary threats being delivered via malicious spam campaigns as we have previously described in detail several times. Following law enforcement disruption of the Emotet botnets, we've been waiting for another threat to fill the void left by Emotet's exit.</p> <p>Beginning in mid-September 2021, we observed malspam campaigns being used to deliver malicious Microsoft Office documents that function as the initial stage of the infection process and are used to infect systems with SQUIRRELWAFFLE. Similar to what has been observed in previous threats like Emotet, these campaigns appear to be leveraging stolen email threads, as the emails themselves appear to be replies to existing email threads. As shown below, these emails typically contain hyperlinks to malicious ZIP archives being hosted on attacker-controlled web servers.</p> <p>The language targeted by the reply messages typically matches the language used in the original email thread, demonstrating that there is some localization taking place dynamically. While the majority of the emails were written in English, the use of other languages across these campaigns highlight that this threat is not limited to a specific geographic region. Across the malicious email campaigns we have observed being used to deliver SQUIRRELWAFFLE, the top five languages used are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English 76% • French 10% • German 7% • Dutch 4% • Polish 3% <p>Consistent with other threats also leveraging stolen email threads, we observed some inconsistencies in how the attacker chooses which email chains to hijack....</p> <p>Since the emergence of SQUIRRELWAFFLE, we have observed steady malicious email campaign activity associated with this threat....</p>

	<p>While the volume associated with these campaigns is not yet reaching the same level seen previously with threats like Emotet, it appears to be fairly consistent and may increase over time as the adversaries infect more users and increase the size of their botnet. The campaigns themselves feature several similar characteristics to the campaigns previously seen associated with established threats like Emotet. Due to the prevalence of these campaigns, organizations should be aware of SQUIRRELWAFFLE and the way it could be used by attackers to further compromise corporate networks.</p> <p>In all of these cases, the emails are designed to trick the potential victim into accessing the included hyperlink to download a malicious ZIP archive. Malicious Microsoft Office files are inside the archives, which initiate the infection process....</p> <p>CONCLUSION</p> <p>A new malware loader named "SQUIRRELWAFFLE" has recently emerged in the threat landscape. This threat is primarily delivered via malicious spam email campaigns and features several interesting characteristics that organizations should be aware of. These infections are also used to facilitate the delivery of additional malware such as Qakbot and Cobalt Strike, two of the most common threats regularly observed targeting organizations around the world. While this threat is relatively new, the distribution campaigns, infrastructure, and C2 implementations feature several interesting techniques that are similar to those seen from other more established threats. Organizations should continue to employ comprehensive defense-in-depth security controls to ensure that they can prevent, detect, or respond to SQUIRRELWAFFLE campaigns that may be encountered in their environments.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 FBI alert: Ranzy Locker ransomware
SOURCE	https://securityaffairs.co/wordpress/123801/cyber-crime/ranzy-locker-ransomware.html?web_view=true
GIST	<p>The FBI published a flash alert to warn of Ranzy Locker ransomware operations that had already compromised at least 30 US companies this year.</p> <p>The gang has been active since at least 2020, threat actors hit organizations from various industries.</p> <p><i>“Unknown cyber criminals using Ranzy Locker ransomware had compromised more than 30 US businesses as of July 2021. The victims include the construction subsector of the critical manufacturing sector, the academia subsector of the government facilities sector, the information technology sector, and the transportation sector.” reads the flash alert.</i></p> <p>The attack vector most used by the Ranzy Locker ransomware operators are brute force attempts targeting Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) credentials. In recent attacks, the group also exploited known Microsoft Exchange Server vulnerabilities and used phishing messages to target computer networks.</p> <p>Once gained access to the target network, the ransomware gang attempts to locate sensitive data, including customer information, PII related files, and financial records. The Ranzy Locker ransomware targets Windows systems, including servers and virtual machines.</p> <p>In some cases the group implemented a double model of extortion, threatening victims to leak the stolen data if they don't pay the ransom.</p> <p>The flash alert also includes indicators of compromise (IOCs) associated with Ranzy Locker operations and Yara rules to detect the threat.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 US bans China Telecom: security concerns
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/oct/27/us-bans-china-telecom-from-operating-over-national-security-concerns

GIST

The US communications regulator has voted to revoke [China](#) Telecom's licence in America over national security concerns in the latest pushback by Washington against what it deems possible infiltration of key networks by Chinese companies.

The decision by the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) means China Telecom Americas must now discontinue US services within 60 days. China Telecom, the largest Chinese telecommunications company, has had authorisation to provide telecommunications services for nearly 20 years in the United States.

The news sent stocks in US-listed Chinese tech firms down sharply and their stocks in Hong Kong also suffered hefty selling, pulling the Hang Seng index down more than 1% lower.

The Hang Seng tech index lost more than 3%, with Tencent, Alibaba, JD.com and XID among those taking a hit.

The FCC found that China Telecom "is subject to exploitation, influence, and control by the Chinese government and is highly likely to be forced to comply with Chinese government requests without sufficient legal procedures subject to independent judicial oversight".

The regulator added that Chinese government ownership and control "raise significant national security and law enforcement risks by providing opportunities" for the company and the Chinese government "to access, store, disrupt, and/or misroute US communications".

In response, a China Telecom America spokesperson said the FCC's decision was "disappointing" and that it would "pursue all available options while continuing to serve our customers".

Former US president Donald Trump moved the issue to the top of the political and diplomatic agenda in 2019 when he [declared a national emergency](#) to ban technology from "foreign adversaries" and subjected the Chinese telecommunications company Huawei to strict export controls. In May 2019, the FCC banned another state-owned Chinese telecommunications company, China Mobile, from providing US services.

Trump then successfully piled pressure on American allies [such as the UK and Australia](#) to follow suit and ban Huawei from their 5G networks.

China Telecom served more than 335 million subscribers worldwide as of 2019 and claims to be the largest fixed line and broadband operator in the world, according to a Senate report. It also provides services to Chinese government facilities in the United States.

The US government said in April 2020 that China Telecom targeted its mobile virtual network to more than 4 million Chinese Americans; 2 million Chinese tourists a year visiting the United States; 300,000 Chinese students at American colleges; and the more than 1,500 Chinese businesses in America.

The FCC warned at the same time that it might shut down US operations of three state-controlled Chinese telecommunications companies, citing national security risks raised by US agencies. They were China Telecom Americas, China Unicom Americas, Pacific Networks Corp and its wholly owned subsidiary ComNet (USA) LLC.

The FCC commissioner, Brendan Carr, a Republican, said the regulator "must remain vigilant to the threats posed" by China. The Chinese embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment.

US senators Rob Portman and Tom Carper, who issued a report in 2020 on the US operations of Chinese telecom companies, praised the FCC decision in a joint statement that cited "substantial and serious national security and law enforcement risks".

In March, the FCC began efforts to revoke authorisation for China Unicom Americas, Pacific Networks and its wholly-owned subsidiary ComNet to provide US telecommunications services. It also designated

	five Chinese companies as posing a threat to national security under a 2019 law, including Huawei , ZTE, Hytera Communications, Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology and Zhejiang Dahua Technology.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Bitcoin price slips 7% to \$58,400
SOURCE	https://www.foxbusiness.com/markets/bitcoin-shares-10-27-2021
GIST	<p>Bitcoin was trading 7% lower on Wednesday morning.</p> <p>The price was around \$58,400 per coin, while rivals Ethereum and Dogecoin were trading around \$3,900 and 22 cents per coin, respectively, according to Coindesk.</p> <p>Shares of Robinhood fell about 10% in premarket trading after the trading platform missed revenue expectations as its cryptocurrency revenue fell from the second quarter's record high.</p> <p>Shares were around \$36.10 following the release of the results, below the \$38 they were priced at in the company's July IPO.</p> <p>Robinhood said its crypto revenues fell to just \$51 million in the third quarter, down from a record \$233 million in the second quarter, according to Coindesk.</p> <p>Lower crypto trading activity led to significantly fewer new funded accounts and lower revenue, according to the company.</p> <p>Total revenue for the quarter was \$365 million, missing the street estimates of \$437.1 million, according to FactSet. The company reported an adjusted net loss of \$2.06 per share, versus analyst expectations of a loss of \$0.67.</p> <p>In other cryptocurrency-related news, profits at payments giant Visa Inc. jumped in its most-recent quarter, driven by consumers and businesses getting back to spending on their credit and debit cards after the pandemic, reported the Associated Press.</p> <p>In a call with investors, Al Kelly, Visa's CEO and chairman, said the growth of cryptocurrencies will also be good for Visa's profits because cryptocurrency investors will need to move money from a traditional bank account to a third-party service to buy Bitcoin and other coins. While Visa's bread and butter will always be credit and debit cards, Kelly said, he sees its network as being a "single connection point" between cryptocurrencies and traditional sources of money.</p> <p>The San Francisco-based company said Tuesday that it earned \$3.58 billion in its fiscal fourth quarter that ended Sept. 30, or \$1.65 a share. That's was up from a profit of \$2.14 billion, or 97 cents per share, in the same period a year earlier.</p> <p>Excluding one-time adjustments, Visa earned \$1.62 a share, up 42% from a year earlier. Analysts had been expected \$1.55 a share, according to FactSet.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 DOJ: darknet drug bust nabs 150 suspects
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/darknet-worldwide-drug-trafficking-sting-150-suspects/
GIST	<p><i>Washington</i> - One hundred and fifty people across three continents have been arrested and charged with drug trafficking and other illicit activity in a sweeping international law enforcement initiative targeting the illegal trafficking of drugs on the Darknet, the Justice Department announced Tuesday.</p> <p>Operation Dark HunTor, a collaborative effort across multinational agencies including the FBI and its counterparts in Australia and Europe, targeted Darknet drug traffickers and other criminals throughout</p>

Australia, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.

The Darknet is a part of the internet that cannot be indexed by search engines and must be accessed through the use of special browsers. Because it's difficult for law enforcement to monitor, websites that sell illicit items or services proliferate on the Darknet.

Law enforcement agencies seized over \$31.6 million in cash and virtual currencies and approximately 234 kilograms of drugs worldwide, including amphetamines, cocaine, opioids and MDMA during the 10-month-long operation. The Justice Department said investigators also collected more than 200,000 pills of ecstasy, fentanyl, oxycodone, hydrocodone, and methamphetamine.

Of the hundreds of thousands of pills seized in the U.S. alone, 90% contained dangerous counterfeit opioids and narcotics, Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said Tuesday, when she announced the operation.

"We are here to expose those who seek to use the shadows of their internet to peddle killer pills worldwide," Monaco said.

Operation Dark HunTor, which officials say is the largest seizure in the multinational Joint Criminal Opioid and Darknet Enforcement's history, led to the arrest of 65 individuals in the U.S. alone, many of whom were charged with trafficking drugs laced with illicit and dangerous substances.

Texas residents Kevin Olando Ombisi and Eric Bernard Russell Jr are charged in a 10-count indictment with selling counterfeit drugs, distributing controlled substances, and money laundering. They are accused of using the Darkweb to sell and mail the mixture of opioids to various jurisdictions including Tennessee, at times falsely misrepresenting the dangerous narcotics as the more conventional drugs and selling them to customers.

According to court documents, from April 2019 to February 2021, the Texas men used the online moniker "CARDINGMASTER" to distribute pills containing methamphetamine disguised as Adderall in exchange for cryptocurrency. Some of the pills they mailed were embossed with the FDA-recognized "AD" to resemble the drug manufactured by Teva pharmaceuticals.

The men had run ads for Adderall on the Darknet's Empire Market, according to an FBI affidavit. "USA SUPER FAST SHIPPING *FREE EXTRA PILLS PROMO*," the promotions read. Undercover DEA agents made purchases from the marketplace three times and found that the pills, like Adderall, were orange and bore markings that seemed to match those found on prescription-based amphetamines. But DEA testing of the pills revealed that they were not amphetamines, but instead were methamphetamines, a Schedule II controlled substance, the February [affadavit](#) said.

Illicit activity on the Darkweb has only increased during the pandemic as more individuals use it to access drugs that in many cases contain dangerous levels of lethal substances.

"They now operate in every single room, in every home that has a smartphone or a computer," Administrator Anne Milgram said, "These are the drugs that are driving the overdose crisis in America."

[Return to Top](#)

Terror Conditions

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 China: Taliban eager for dialogue
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-are-eager-dialogue-with-world-chinese-minister-says-2021-10-27/

GIST	<p>DUBAI, Oct 27 (Reuters) - The Taliban are eager to have dialogue with the rest of the world, and the international community should help Afghanistan with its development, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Wednesday.</p> <p>In an address delivered by video link to a conference in Iran, Wang said Beijing was ready to host further talks between Afghanistan and its neighbours on the country's future.</p> <p>"The Taliban are eager to have dialogue with the world ... China will host the third Neighbours of Afghanistan meeting at the appropriate time," Wang said in comments broadcast live by Iranian state TV.</p> <p>The meeting of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries was attended in person by the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and China and Russia participated by video link.</p> <p>The talks followed a similar conference involving Afghanistan's neighbouring countries that was hosted by Pakistan in September, and are aimed at establishing durable peace in Afghanistan.</p> <p>China, which has not fought in Afghanistan, has been holding out an olive branch to the Taliban since they regained power in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of U.S. forces in August.</p> <p>The United States and other Western countries are seeking ways to engage with the Taliban and ensure humanitarian aid flows into the country, without granting them the legitimacy they seek.</p> <p>U.S. officials and Taliban representatives discussed humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan this month in Qatar but Washington said the meetings did not amount to recognition of the Taliban.</p> <p>The United States and other Western nations are reluctant to provide the Taliban with funds until the Islamist militant movement provides assurances that it will uphold human rights, and in particular the rights of women.</p> <p>At Wednesday's conference in Iran, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian backed the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan, state television reported. His remarks echoed Iran's official stance.</p> <p>Shi'ite Muslim Iran has been a foe of the hardline Sunni Muslim Taliban for decades, but for the past few years it has been openly meeting Taliban leaders. In July, Tehran hosted a meeting of then Afghan government representatives and a high-level Taliban political committee.</p> <p>Iran has criticised the Taliban, which took control over Afghanistan in August, for excluding ethnic minorities from the government.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Turkey extends Syria, Iraq missions 2yrs
SOURCE	https://www.thedefensepost.com/2021/10/27/turkey-syria-iraq-missions/
GIST	<p>Turkey's parliament on Tuesday extended the military's mandate to launch cross-border operations in Syria and Iraq by two more years.</p> <p>The motion was first approved in 2013 to support the international campaign against the Islamic State (IS) group, and has since been renewed annually.</p> <p>But this marked the first time that the motion was extended by two years, giving President Recep Tayyip Erdogan a longer mandate to pursue campaigns against Kurdish militias in the restive region.</p> <p>It also marked the first time the main opposition CHP party voted against the measure, setting it on a more isolationist course ahead of a general election due by June 2023.</p>

“You don’t tell us what it’s about. You say (it will be valid) for two years and tell us to vote for it. Why?” CHP leader **Kemal Kilicdaroglu** asked Erdogan in an address to his party members in parliament.

The CHP party voted against the deployment of Turkish forces in Iraq in 2003, but had otherwise backed Erdogan in his various international campaigns.

The new motion allows the military to carry out cross-border operations against IS jihadists and other groups deemed by Ankara as terrorist organizations.

“The risks and threats to national security posed by ongoing conflicts in regions near Turkey’s southern border are continuing to increase,” the motion presented to parliament by Erdogan’s ruling AKP says.

Early this month, Erdogan said Turkey was [preparing to step up operations in Syria](#), where its [forces came under attack from a Kurdish militia group](#) supported by Washington in the fight against the IS group.

Turkey and its proxies have seized control of territory inside Syria over four military operations launched since 2016, focusing heavily on various Kurdish militias.

The militants also use their hideouts in northern Iraq as a springboard for attacks aimed at Turkish soil. The Turkish army often bombs their bases in the mountainous regions.

Ankara says it uses its right under international law to self-defense, although the operations cause strains in ties with Baghdad.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Terrorism networks in German army
SOURCE	https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/10/27/bund-o27.html
GIST	<p>Far-right terrorist networks remain active within the German army (Bundeswehr) and its immediate environment. This was underlined by the arrest of two former Bundeswehr paratroopers by criminal police officers last Wednesday.</p> <p>According to the news magazine <i>Der Spiegel</i>, Prosecutor General Peter Frank accuses the two persons arrested, Arend-Adolf G. and Achim A., of serious criminal offences. The charges range from conspiracy to murder, hostage-taking, planning crimes against humanity, to suspicion of founding a terrorist organisation.</p> <p>The two former elite soldiers are said to have prepared the setting up of a mercenary force of 100 to 150 men, whose services they offered to the Saudi Arabian regime as shock troops in the Saudis’ bloody war in Yemen. According to <i>Der Spiegel</i>, these accusations stem from a tip given by a former Bundeswehr soldier to the Military Counter-Intelligence Service (MAD) and have been confirmed by the evaluation of numerous chats and the monitoring of more than two dozen telephone connections.</p> <p>The case is explosive not only because recruiting German nationals as mercenaries for a foreign power carries heavy prison sentences. There are also close links between the mercenary ring and right-wing extremist networks planning terrorist attacks within Germany.</p> <p>Arend-Adolf G. and Achim A. are said to have worked for the security company Asgaard after their service time in the Bundeswehr, with G., on occasion, working as Asgaard’s managing director. The company, which among other things was active in the Somali civil war and Iraq, where it guarded the Saudi Arabian embassy, specifically recruits members from special units of the Bundeswehr and the police, promising them monthly salaries in five figures.</p> <p>Asgaard not only maintains close relations with German state security forces, but also with right-wing extremist networks and apparently serves as a link between the two. A year ago, <i>Der Spiegel</i> and the ARD</p>

television magazine Kontraste reported on Asgaard's corporate culture, which glorifies National Socialism and the German army (Wehrmacht) under Hitler. The magazine also gave details of the right-wing extremist network in contact with the Asgaard director Dirk Gaßmann. Among other things, *Der Spiegel* published a video showing Asgaard glorifying the fascist tradition of the Wehrmacht in its Iraqi company premises. WSWR reported on the incident at the time.

In the summer of 2020, former and active police officers and soldiers who, based on their postings on social media, clearly identified themselves as extreme right-wing, took part in a meeting at Asgaard's headquarters in Hamm. Among the participants was 41-year-old Thomas S., who at the time headed an investigation team in the Frankfurt police while also working as a leading functionary for Asgaard.

Shortly afterwards, the Frankfurt public prosecutor's office opened "an investigation into Thomas S. on suspicion of bribery as well as violation of official secrecy." In addition to "unauthorised secondary employment for a private security company" (suspected of being under the influence of right-wing extremism), the prosecutor's office accused him of "unlawful queries from police databases." It is not clear whether this is the same data retrieved from Hesse police computers that became the basis of numerous threatening letters sent by the sender "NSU 2.0."

According to *Der Spiegel*, the federal prosecutor general is currently investigating "a senior employee" of Asgaard on suspicion of threatening to kill Martina Renner, a parliamentary deputy of the Left Party. Renner, among other things, had been involved in the committee set up in the state of Thuringia to investigate the activities of the far-right terrorist National Socialist Underground (NSU).

In April this year, the *Tagesspiegel* newspaper reported on links between a federal criminal police bodyguard and Asgaard. Once again, there existed a right-wing extremist background. The Berlin public prosecutor's office is investigating three federal police officers (BKA) belonging to the unit "Foreign and Special Operations" after they gave Hitler salutes at an internal party, and spread racist chats. One of these officers is also said to have worked for Asgaard.

Tagesspiegel also indicated possible links between the BKA officers and the right-wing "prepper," or survivalist, group "Nordkreuz," which hoarded ammunition and drew up assassination lists for left-wing political figures, opponents on a so-called Day X. The BKA officers had taken part in shooting exercises at a site in Güstrow where Nordkreuz was also active.

In May, MDR television reported that Germany's domestic intelligence agency (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, BfV) and Military Counter-Intelligence Service (MAD) were investigating links between Asgaard and a former member of the Bundeswehr paramilitary unit, the KSK. It is being examined "whether he is part of a suspected right-wing extremist network with links to the unit." The Ministry of Defence informed the Bundestag's Defence Committee about this investigation at a secret meeting. A total of 59 people—mostly Bundeswehr reservists, but including some active soldiers with links to Asgaard, are currently being investigated by the BfV and MAD.

The fact that the Federal Prosecutor's Office now feels obliged to arrest two former soldiers who worked for Asgaard indicates the extent of the far-right conspiracy. As always, the authorities only act when so much has leaked out to the public that they can no longer remain inactive without completely discrediting themselves.

But then, as usual, the matter is covered up as quickly as possible and swept under the rug. This was the case with the right-wing extremist Bundeswehr officer Franco A., who assumed a false identity as a refugee, hoarded weapons and planned a terrorist attack in collaboration with right-wing extremist forces in the elite KSK troop and the nationwide "Hannibal" network, to which the Nordkreuz group belongs.

The BfV, MAD, BKA, the German Ministries of Defence and the Interior, all have a record of penetration by far-right networks and have repeatedly suppressed information to protect such extremist forces. Although the extent and dangers arising from far-right networks are known and documented, those responsible remain largely unchallenged or remain at large.

	<p>Franco A., who was long since released from pre-trial detention, is being tried in Frankfurt, four years after his activities were uncovered. The trial is expected to drag on into next year. The court had originally refused to open the trial at all and had to be forced to do so by a higher court. Now the entire process is increasingly developing into a farce.</p> <p>The favourable treatment of far-right criminals stands in sharp contrast to the ruthless persecution of left-wing demonstrators, for example those arrested for protesting against the G20 summit in Hamburg, and has social roots. Faced with rapidly growing class antagonisms and the declining influence of all the established parties, the German ruling class is increasingly relying on state repression and fascist violence to suppress social resistance.</p> <p>A century ago, during the Weimar Republic, paramilitary organisations and extreme right-wing forces, which later formed the basis of the Nazi regime, were under the special protection of the state. Hitler himself spent just a few months in prison following his attempt at a bloody coup d'état. While in prison he was able to write <i>Mein Kampf</i> and enjoy regular visits from a host of his admirers. The treatment of the pacifist and leftist Carl von Ossietzky was very different. Arrested following Hitler's assumption of power in 1933, he disappeared behind bars for criticising the military. The ruling circles in Germany are returning to precisely these traditions in the face of the current profound crisis of capitalism.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Social media breeding ground for extremism
SOURCE	https://triblive.com/local/regional/3-years-after-tree-of-life-shooting-social-media-still-a-breeding-ground-for-extremism-experts-say/
GIST	<p>Federal prosecutors say the mass shooting that Robert Bowers carried out at a Pittsburgh synagogue three years ago was preceded by disturbing, hate-filled activity on social media.</p> <p>Since then, social media sites have continued to be linked to — and some say breeding grounds of — acts of violence and hate, from the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings in New Zealand to the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol.</p> <p>“It feels like every day you can open your phone or turn on the TV or pick up the paper and see instances of shocking anti-Semitism and hate that could chill you to your bones,” said Jonathan Greenblatt, chief executive of the Anti-Defamation League.</p> <p>Greenblatt was among those who participated in last week's three-day Eradicate Hate Global Summit at Pittsburgh's David L. Lawrence Convention Center. Organizers said the event was born out of the Tree of Life synagogue shooting on Oct. 27, 2018, the deadliest anti-Semitic attack in U.S. history. Bowers is awaiting trial on charges that he killed 11 people there that day.</p> <p>Organizers of the summit said they are determined to root out hate speech and violent extremism. Many of the conversations during the summit centered on social media and what experts see as their rise as a breeding ground for hateful rhetoric.</p> <p>Federal prosecutors pointed to Bowers' activity on the social media website Gab in the days and weeks leading up to the attack at the Squirrel Hill synagogue, which housed the Tree of Life-Or L'Simcha, Dor Hadash and New Light congregations. The Anti-Defamation League said this month that the social media site “has a long history as a haven for extremists, conspiracy theorists and misinformation.”</p> <p>Prosecutors said Bowers shared numerous posts on social media that disparaged Jewish people and immigrants, taking specific aim at the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and its efforts to help refugees. HIAS President and CEO Mark Hetfield told the Tribune-Review days after the synagogue attack that Dor Hadash had participated in a refugee Shabbat the week before.</p>

Prosecutors said Bowers took to social media minutes before opening fire at the synagogue, posting, “HIAS likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can’t sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I’m going in.”

That type of toxic thinking — the idea that Jews, immigrants and other “undesirables” are out to take away “our” jobs and “replace us” — is one of the more menacing out there, said Heidi Beirich, co-founder of the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism. She also participated in the Eradicate Hate summit.

“Probably the most dangerous white supremacist ideology out there is the same thing that motivated the attack (at the Tree of Life synagogue), and that is this notion of a great replacement conspiracy theory,” she said.

“It is becoming a unifying way of thinking by white supremacists,” she added, pointing to shootings driven by such violent rhetoric in El Paso, Texas, and Christchurch, New Zealand.

She said the conspiracy theory is growing, including among some prominent figures in government and the media.

“It bodes very, very poorly for the future if we start to see more and more Americans ... frame political change around a conspiracy theory that thinks that the changing demographic is actually an orchestrated plot to hurt white people,” Beirich said.

Experts agree that there is no singular solution.

Elizabeth Neumann, chief strategy officer for Moonshot, said her team has seen success in reaching people who are in the early stages of the radicalization process. Moonshot, founded in 2015, uses technology to analyze consumers of conspiracy theories, disinformation and extremist content and then redirects them to other sources.

“We’re about to identify those individuals that are in the process of radicalization — they’re seeking out harmful content — and we’re learning how to target the right messaging to them,” she said.

For example, so-called high-risk users in Indonesia were 128% more likely to engage with advertisements for loneliness as opposed to ads offering information.

One U.S. study found that users searching for content on armed militia-type groups were more likely to click on an advertisement that was intentionally designed to elicit emotion but instead redirected them to a crisis text line.

There remains a question of how much responsibility social platforms themselves bear and how they should respond.

Amarnath Amarasingam, an assistant professor at Queen’s University in Ontario, said kicking people who espouse hateful and violent far-right ideology off sites such as Twitter and Facebook simply created a migration to alternative platforms such as Gab, Parler and Telegram, where influencers were able to reestablish both themselves and their audiences.

“One of the consequences (of kicking users off of mainstream platforms) is that people who might be on the fringes and have a small number of infringements on a large platform lose access to their accounts and migrate to a platform that is far less diverse ideologically and far more toxic,” said Nick Pickles, a senior policy director at Twitter.

“I think there’s a question to think about in terms of, ‘How do we improve behavior of people before they reach the point where they’re suspended from a large platform?’ ” Pickles said.

	<p>Another answer might come from upending the business model of some platforms, said Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, founder and chief executive of Valens Global, a company that helps governments, private companies and other organizations understand and deal with threats posed by terrorist and other violent organizations.</p> <p>“Polarization is inherent to these platforms,” he said. “You know that attacking somebody — going negative — will get you much more interaction, much more retweets, much more engagement than saying something positive.”</p> <p>He said a deeper discussion needs to take place about how that engagement affects society and what obligations companies have.</p> <p>“It’s much easier to dehumanize other people either for reasons of race and religion and ethnicity or reasons of political differences on these platforms than it is face to face,” Gartenstein-Ross said. “To rehumanize, you often have to get off of the internet and look at someone from across the table.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Gunmen kill 4 Pakistan police near border
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/gunmen-kill-4-pakistani-police-near-border-with-afghanistan/
GIST	<p>PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Unidentified gunmen attacked a police patrol overnight in northwest Pakistan, killing four before fleeing the scene, a police official said Wednesday.</p> <p>No group claimed responsibility for the attack in Lakki Marwat, a town in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan. Police official Umar Khan said a search operation for the culprits was still underway.</p> <p>Khan provided no further details and only said the funeral of slain officers was held Wednesday morning.</p> <p>Pakistan has witnessed scores of such terrorist attacks in recent years, most of have been claimed by the Pakistani Taliban and the Islamic State group. Both organizations have been emboldened by Taliban resurgence in neighboring Afghanistan, where Pakistani militants are still believed to be hiding.</p> <p>Before the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan often accused each other of turning a blind eye to militants operating along their porous border.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Iran’s role in attack signals new escalation
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/iran-militias-tanf-us-forces/2021/10/26/8c75ad98-35c1-11ec-9662-399cfa75efee_story.html
GIST	<p>Iran appears to have been responsible for a drone attack last week on a U.S. outpost in Syria, suggesting that a new front could be opening in the low-level conflict that has simmered since the United States pulled out of the Iran nuclear accord in 2018.</p> <p>No U.S. casualties were reported in the attack on the isolated U.S. outpost at Tanf near the Jordanian and Iraqi borders, according to the U.S. military. But pro-Iranian media trumpeted it as a “victory”; it would be the first major attack on U.S. troops in Syria by Iran.</p> <p>It also marked the biggest and most sophisticated strike against the relatively small U.S. force in Syria, which was deployed in 2015 to support Kurdish-led forces in the fight against the Islamic State.</p> <p>At a news briefing Monday, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby refused to directly blame Iran for the barrage of rockets and exploding drones, which caused considerable damage to the base, according to photographs circulating on social media. He described it as “a complex, coordinated and deliberate attack” and noted that similar attacks have been carried out by Iranian-allied Shiite militias against U.S. troops elsewhere.</p>

But news outlets affiliated with Iran haven't tried to downplay the likely involvement of Tehran and its allied militias. Instead, they have touted the attack in commentaries as a major success and hinted that more strikes against U.S. troops in Syria will follow.

They attributed the attack to a little known group called Allies of Syria, which earlier this month issued a statement threatening "harsh" retaliation for an Israeli airstrike against an Iranian base outside the Syrian city of Palmyra on Oct. 14. The Israeli strike, the statement said, was launched from the direction of Tanf.

The attack on the U.S. outpost demonstrated "a great deal of boldness and strength" on the part of the Allies of Syria that will change the balance of power in Syria, said Iran's [Fars News Agency](#), which is run by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the military branch that oversees Iran's extensive network of militias in the region.

The [al-Ahed](#) website, affiliated with Lebanon's Hezbollah movement, said the attack heralded the start of "a new phase in the confrontation" in which Iran and its allies would seek to liberate Syria from U.S. troops. It noted that the American withdrawal from Afghanistan "happened only under the pressure of military operations and not political or diplomatic pressure."

U.S. troops in neighboring Iraq have come under frequent rocket attacks over the past four years, and at least three [similar attacks](#) involving drones have been reported in the past year. The United States has retaliated with airstrikes against Iranian-allied militias in both Syria and Iraq, [most recently in February](#), and it might respond to this one, too, Kirby said.

Until recently, the estimated 900 U.S. troops scattered thinly across a vast swath of northeastern Syria and at their lone outpost farther south at Tanf had been largely ignored by Iranian troops and their militia allies backing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

That began to change over the summer with a series of largely unreported rocket attacks against U.S. bases in the Kurdish-controlled northeast, said Michael Knights, an analyst at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He attributed the shift to a decision by Iran to order its allies to refrain from attacking U.S. troops in Iraq to ensure stability in the run-up to parliamentary elections that were held this month.

The escalation at the Tanf garrison is likely tied to the dimming prospects for a resumption of negotiations to renew the Iran nuclear accord, according to Ali Alfoneh, an Iran expert at the Arab Gulf States Institute.

So far, Iran's new hard-line government has shown no inclination to return to the talks, and Robert Malley, the U.S. special representative to Iran, warned Monday that the effort to persuade it to do so has entered a "critical phase."

Speaking in a conference call with reporters after consultations with allies in Europe and Arab states in the Persian Gulf, he described a "shared impatience" with Iran and said he discussed with allies "other tools" that might be used to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon should Tehran continue to refuse to resume the talks.

Alfoneh said Iran may be seeking to secure leverage over the terms under which it returns to the talks by demonstrating its destructive capabilities against U.S. troops in the region. Other attacks may occur, he said, but "nothing major because it's not in Iran's interest to escalate too far."

"This is part of the negotiation. Iran cannot negotiate without military pressure because the U.S. holds all the cards," he said.

But the Tanf outpost, where a small number of U.S. troops are garrisoned in isolation from the bulk of the American force farther north, has long been a source of frustration to Iran as well as the government in Damascus. Near a key crossing on the Syrian-Iraqi border, it cuts off a major trade route between Iran, Iraq and Syria, the reports in Iranian-affiliated news outlets noted.

	<p>Iran may also be eyeing a deadline for the departure of U.S. combat troops from Iraq at the end of December, which could provide another trigger for renewed pressure on U.S. forces in the region, Knights said.</p> <p>“Toward the end of the year when the troops are supposed to leave Iraq and with the nuclear agreement not going that well, we’re going to see the temperature rise,” he predicted.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 IS Afghanistan capable striking US in 6mo.
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/26/islamic-state-afghanistan-capacity-strike-us-next-year-al-qaida
GIST	<p>The US intelligence community has assessed that Islamic State in Afghanistan could have the capability of attacking the United States in as little as six months – and has the intention to do so, a senior Pentagon official has told Congress.</p> <p>“The intelligence community currently assesses that both Isis-K [Islamic State Khorasan Province, the Afghanistan-based group] and al-Qaida have the intent to conduct external operations, including against the United States, but neither currently has the capability to do so. We could see Isis-K generate that capability in somewhere between six or 12 months,” said Colin Kahl, under secretary of defense for policy.</p> <p>The remarks are the latest reminder that Afghanistan could still pose serious national security concerns for the US even after it ended its two-decade war in defeat in August.</p> <p>The Taliban, who won the war, are enemies of Islamic State and have seen its attempts to impose law and order after the US pullout thwarted by suicide bombings and other attacks claimed by Islamic State.</p> <p>They include bombings targeting the minority Shia sect and even an Islamic State beheading of a member of a Taliban militia force in the eastern city of Jalalabad.</p> <p>In testimony before the Senate armed services committee, Kahl said it was still unclear whether the Taliban has the ability to fight Islamic State effectively following the US withdrawal in August. The US fought the Taliban as well as striking groups like Islamic State and al-Qaida.</p> <p>“It is our assessment that the Taliban and Isis-K are mortal enemies. So the Taliban is highly motivated to go after Isis-K. Their ability to do so, I think, is to be determined,” Kahl said, using an acronym for Islamic State in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Kahl estimated Islamic State had a “cadre of a few thousand” fighters.</p> <p>Amir Khan Muttaqi, acting foreign minister of the new Taliban government, has said the threat from Islamic State militants will be addressed. He also said Afghanistan would not become a base for attacks on other countries.</p> <p>Kahl suggested al-Qaida in Afghanistan posed a more complex problem, given its ties to the Taliban. It was those ties that triggered the US military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 following al-Qaida’s September 11 attacks on New York and Washington. The Taliban had harbored al-Qaida leaders.</p> <p>Kahl said it could take al-Qaida “a year or two” to regenerate the capability to carry out attacks outside of Afghanistan against the US.</p> <p>Joe Biden, whose supervision of the chaotic end to the war last summer has damaged his approval ratings, has said the US will continue to be vigilant against threats emanating from Afghanistan by carrying out</p>

intelligence-gathering operations in the country that would identify threats from groups like al-Qaida and Islamic State.

Kahl said the goal was to disrupt those groups so that Islamic State and al-Qaida don't become capable of striking the US.

"We need to be vigilant in disrupting that," he said.

Still, US officials privately warn that identifying and disrupting groups like al-Qaida and Islamic State is extremely difficult without any troops in the country. Drones capable of striking Islamic State and al-Qaida targets are being flown in from the Gulf.

Kahl said the US did not yet have any agreement with countries neighboring Afghanistan to host troops for counter-terrorism efforts.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Pentagon: 439 Americans in Afghanistan
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/oct/26/number-americans-still-afghanistan-grows-439/
GIST	<p>There are at least 439 American citizens still in Afghanistan, a senior Pentagon official told Congress on Tuesday, upping the number from what the administration told lawmakers just last week.</p> <p>Of those Americans, 196 have told the State Department they want out — far higher than the fewer than 100 that Biden officials publicly revealed in early September. Another 243 people the State Department is in contact with have not yet signaled an intent to leave, Under Secretary of Defense Colin Kahl told senators.</p> <p>Sen. Ben Sasse, Nebraska Republican, said Congress was given a total figure last week of 363 Americans.</p> <p>He called the Americans left behind a "slow-motion hostage crisis," and said President Biden has shown an indifference to the life-or-death situation these Americans face.</p> <p>Mr. Sasse accused the administration of "gaslighting the public" by lowballing the numbers. "The president needs to take responsibility and get our people home," the senator said.</p> <p>In the days after the end of U.S. military operations, the Biden administration reported there were about 100 Americans still in country and looking to get out.</p> <p>Last week, the estimate given publicly was between 100 and 200 Americans remained in Afghanistan after dozens were brought out a day or two earlier.</p> <p>State Department spokesman Ned Price said those evacuations are actually the reason the numbers are rising. He said people see the "proven ability" to get out, so more people are expressing interest.</p> <p>That does not explain the difficulty in pinpointing how many Americans are still there in total, including those who haven't said they want to leave.</p> <p>Mr. Kahl said the U.S. had helped 240 Americans escape since the end of the U.S. war effort. Another 74 made it out without the Biden administration's help.</p> <p>Combined, the 314 people who escaped and the 439 still in-country would mean at least 753 American citizens were stranded when Mr. Biden followed through on plans to pull out troops.</p> <p>Mr. Kahl revealed that 5,500 Americans were withdrawn during the final weeks of the U.S. mission. That's also lower than the 6,000-person figure the administration had been using publicly.</p>

In total, officials say they helped airlift more than 120,000 people. Most of those are Afghans, though few had been approved for the Special Immigrant Visa for Afghans who assisted the U.S. war effort.

Tens of thousands of Afghans have reached the U.S., most brought under what's known as "humanitarian parole," a power the Homeland Security secretary has to admit people deemed to be exceptional deserving cases.

Mr. Kahl said, in order to reach the U.S., Afghans had to give fingerprints and basic biographical information and go through a records check of databases held by Customs and Border Protection, the FBI and the National Counterterrorism Center.

If no derogatory information showed up, people were brought in without needing to go through an in-person interview. That's a far lower standard than the refugee or special immigrant process that would normally be applied to people in that situation.

Mr. Kahl said if an identity or fingerprints did trigger one of the databases, then the Afghan would go through an in-person interview.

Sen. Josh Hawley, Missouri Republican, said that was different than what he was hearing from Homeland Security, which is leading the approval process.

"What DHS says is there was never any in-person interview done anywhere," Mr. Hawley said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Iran wanted US out of Afghanistan
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/world/middleeast/iran-taliban-afghanistan.html
GIST	<p>For 20 years, Iranian officials have said they wanted the U.S. military out of Afghanistan. Iran supplied Afghan insurgents with weapons to use against American soldiers. It sheltered Al Qaeda's top leaders in Tehran. It courted the Taliban with diplomatic visits, covertly and then publicly.</p> <p>But when the United States finally left Afghanistan in August, the swift Taliban takeover caught Iran off guard.</p> <p>Suddenly, Iran, a Shiite Muslim theocracy, had a militant Sunni theocracy on its border that is widely seen as anti-Shiite. The upheaval has also sent a flood of Afghan refugees into Iran, has led to fears that Afghanistan will again become an incubator for terrorism, and has trapped Iranian leaders in a diplomatic tangle in dealing with a Taliban government seen as both a potential enemy and partner.</p> <p>The episode has turned into a classic lesson in "be careful what you wish for."</p> <p>"Iran has come to understand that the enemy's enemy is not your friend, and the Taliban are a more complex problem than Americans," said Mohammad Hossein Emadi, a former Iranian diplomat who advised Afghanistan's government and worked in the country for the United Nations. "The consensus is to deal with the Taliban very carefully and pragmatically."</p> <p>Iran's biggest concern, officials said, is the resurgence of the Afghan branch of the Islamic State, which has carried out large-scale attacks against Shiites in Afghanistan and could use Afghanistan as a base to launch terrorist attacks in Iran.</p> <p>The Taliban, despite their promises to provide security and stability, have so far proven unwilling or unable to prevent ISIS attacks on Shiites in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Iranian officials are also concerned about the fate of two minority ethnic groups, the Hazara, who are Shiite Muslim, and the Tajiks, who have close cultural ties to Iran.</p>

The Taliban eliminated the informal power-sharing arrangement that encouraged representation for those groups in the government, and they have been accused of carrying out [extrajudicial killings](#) and forced displacements of members of [both groups](#). The Taliban have denied these accusations.

The Taliban takeover has also sent a new wave of refugees into Iran, adding to the more than two million Afghans who fled to Iran during previous times of upheaval. Their arrival has stretched Iran's resources at a time when the country's economy has been battered by the coronavirus pandemic and international financial sanctions.

But any Iranian response to the new situation in Afghanistan has potential costs.

Recognizing the Taliban could set off a backlash at home among Iranians who see the Taliban as a terrorist group and tarnish Iran's branding of itself as a protector of Shiites in the Muslim world.

Rejecting the Taliban, on the other hand, could undo the gains of Iran's careful courtship of the group over the years, and quickly turn a tenuous relationship hostile. Iranian officials fear getting dragged into a protracted conflict it neither wants nor could afford.

For now, Iranian officials say they are taking a middle-of-the-road approach.

Officials have acknowledged the Taliban are a reality but stopped short of recognizing them as Afghanistan's legitimate government. They have also expressed concern about the safety of resistance leaders such as [Ahmad Massoud, who leads an anti-Taliban militia](#) with historical ties to Iran in the Panjshir Valley in Afghanistan, although they have not publicly endorsed his cause, and diplomats and analysts said they had seen no sign that Iran was supporting it financially or militarily.

"We are in contact with all sides and advise them all to implement the idea of an inclusive government," Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdullahian said in an interview. "Afghanistan is facing many different challenges. The existence of ISIS in Afghanistan that has the experience of guerrilla warfare in Syria is a real threat."

Iran sent fighters and commanders to Syria in 2011 and Iraq in 2014 to fight ISIS, but even if Iran offered, the Taliban are unlikely to welcome Iranian forces the way Iraq did.

Iran has had at least two diplomatic meetings with the Taliban since the group seized power, including a meeting with the Taliban foreign minister on Saturday.

Iran has laid out three main demands of the Taliban, according to Iranian diplomats, officials and experts. They include securing Iran's borders from terrorist infiltration, preventing the Islamic State from gaining ground in Afghanistan, and protecting the rights and security of Shiite minorities.

In addition, Iran has asked the Taliban to help curb drug lords from using Iran as a corridor to transport Afghan opium to Europe, to keep open commerce and currency exchange with Iran, and to refrain from creating social and economic conditions that would send more Afghans across Iran's borders, Kamal Kharazi, the former foreign minister and current head of Iran's powerful Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, told Iranian news media last week.

"Our strategy in Afghanistan completely depends on the Taliban's behavior," Mr. Kharazi said. "The Islamic Republic of Iran does not want to meddle in Afghanistan's affairs but naturally we have legitimate interests that must be guaranteed."

Iran and Afghanistan share deep cultural and historical ties that date back centuries. One of Afghanistan's two official languages, Dari, is a dialect of Persian, and the two countries share many traditions, including celebrating the Nowruz new year holiday in the spring.

Iran's border with Afghanistan stretches 572 miles with two crossings vital to trade and commerce. Iran's exports to Afghanistan total an estimated \$7 billion annually, and the country has relied on Afghanistan's currency market to acquire hard currency in circumvention of international banking sanctions.

Public opinion in Iran is decidedly against the Taliban and critical of the government's outreach to the group.

Many liberal Iranians identify with the suffering of Afghans under a theocracy, similar to their own lives under the rule of Islamic Republic. The Taliban's attacks on the rights of women and girls, from requiring head scarves to a ban on singing and sports, and its crackdowns on independent journalists and activists, remind many Iranians of their own struggles with the authorities in Iran.

But conservatives and members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps have also attacked the government for not supporting the Afghan resistance.

"Why is Iran jumping into the arms of the Taliban?" Muhammad Hossein Jaffarian, a former Iranian official who fought with the mujahedeen in Afghanistan, asked in a talk on [Clubhouse, the social networking app](#). "You must not put all your eggs in one basket."

Iran and Afghanistan's political relationship has ebbed and flowed over the decades, depending on who held power in Afghanistan. In the 1980s, Iran backed the mujahedeen militia fighting Russian occupation and the Sunni militant Haqqani faction, now a part of the Taliban. In the late 1990s, Iran and the Taliban [nearly went to war](#) over [the Taliban's killing of 10 Iranian diplomats and a journalist in Mazar-i-Sharif](#).

In 2001, Iran sided with the United States in its invasion of Afghanistan, supplying military intelligence and security cooperation, and later was instrumental in establishing the first post-Taliban government, led by Hamid Karzai.

But after President George W. Bush included Iran in his infamous "axis of evil" speech in 2002 and later established American military bases in Iraq, Iran's neighbor to the west, the calculus in Tehran shifted. Iran began reaching out to the Taliban with the goal of chasing the United States out of the country.

Vali R. Nasr, a senior adviser to the Obama administration on Afghanistan and Pakistan, said Iran began to panic when the Trump administration started peace talks with the Taliban. Iranian officials criticized the Trump administration for not demanding enough political concessions from the Taliban in talks in Doha, Qatar, resulting in "an American and Pashtun deal" rather than one benefiting all Afghans, Mr. Nasr said.

"Iranians are masters of leverage," Mr. Nasr said. "They knew once Doha was signed there was no stopping the Taliban. The policy is right now to avoid the worst in Afghanistan and find what to pursue in the mess that America has left them."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Iraq officials: 11 villagers killed in IS attack
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iraqi-officials-11-killed-attack-northeast-baghdad-80799878
GIST	<p>Baghdad -- Gunmen from the Islamic State extremist group attacked a village northeast of Baghdad on Tuesday, killing at least 11 civilians and wounding six others, Iraqi security officials said.</p> <p>The officials said the attack occurred in the predominantly Shiite village of al-Rashad northeast of Baqouba in Diyala province. The circumstances of the attack were not immediately clear, but two officials who spoke to The Associated Press said Islamic State group militants had kidnapped two villagers earlier and then raided the village when their demands for ransom were not met.</p> <p>Machine guns were used in the attack, they added, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations. They said all the dead and wounded were civilians.</p>

	<p>Attacks targeting civilians have become rare in Iraq since the Islamic State group was largely defeated in the country in 2017, although it remains active through sleeper cells in many areas. Militants from the Sunni Muslim extremist group still conduct operations, often targeting security forces, power stations and other infrastructure.</p> <p>A roadside bomb attack targeted a Baghdad suburb in July, killing at least 30 people and wounding dozens of others at a crowded market. In January, twin suicide bombings ripped through a busy market in the Iraqi capital, killing at least 32 people and wounding dozens. Iraqi officials blamed IS for those attacks.</p>
Return to Top	

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Tainted Halloween candy myth?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/27/us/halloween-candy-thc-marijuana.html
GIST	<p>As children go trick-or-treating, it is exceedingly unlikely that your neighbor will put a razor blade in an apple, poison a wrapped Snickers bar, or, in this year's version of the same old story, swap THC-laced gummies for regular candy, tricking innocent youngsters into accidentally getting high.</p> <p>Historically, such acts have not just been rare, but very close to completely undocumented. The lack of evidence has done little to reassure parents, the police and some in the media, who have repeated the mostly unverified claims for decades.</p> <p>Typically, the warnings come before Halloween, instructing parents to inspect their children's haul for any signs of foul play. In recent years, with marijuana becoming legal in more states, the concern has shifted to children accidentally ingesting edible weed candies, laced with THC and designed to look like traditional snacks. "A different sugar high: Bensalem police warn of 'weed candy' this Halloween," read one headline from Pennsylvania this month.</p> <p>The specter of THC-laced candies is no more threatening than past baseless legends, said Joel Best, a sociology professor at the University of Delaware who has studied the topic since 1983. He's found virtually no evidence of it happening in real life, despite the annual ritual of headlines and warnings.</p> <p>"This spreads primarily among people who have no idea what this stuff costs," he said.</p> <p>A 500-milligram bag of a THC-infused Cheetos-like snack can be found online for \$15 and up, while THC-laced imitations of Sour Patch Kids will cost at least \$20. That price makes them something few people would give away, he said.</p> <p>The legend may have its roots in 1959, when a dentist in California handed out laxative pills coated in candy, causing 30 children to fall sick. The police said 450 of the pills were "put into the trick-or-treat bags of youngsters," according to a UPI report published in The New York Times a few days after Halloween that year.</p> <p>Mr. Best, who has tracked media coverage in major newspapers every year since 1958, said the fear hit its peak in the early 1970s.</p> <p>"Those treats may be tricks," The Times warned in 1970.</p> <p>"Take, for example, that plump red apple that Junior gets from a kindly old woman down the block," The Times wrote that year. "It may have a razor blade hidden inside. The chocolate 'candy' bar may be a laxative, the bubble gum may be sprinkled with lye, the popcorn balls may be coated with camphor, the candy may turn out to be packets containing sleeping pills."</p>

Concerns died down for a bit, Mr. Best said, until 1982, when [cyanide-laced Tylenol pills killed seven people](#) beginning in September, prompting copycat attacks and even more fears of contaminated items. Amid the nationwide attention, some communities banned trick-or-treating, and grocery stores reported candy sales dropping 20 to 50 percent.

The internet age would allow for more pranksters to claim they had found foreign objects in their candy. After all, kids playing tricks on adults is one of the main points of Halloween, and it's not difficult to create a fraudulent Instagram post, he said. But he continued to find few confirmed cases of children actually being harmed by treats.

Over the years, occasional reports of a child being harmed would emerge in the media. But a funny thing happened when Mr. Best investigated what happened next: Nearly every time, the claims would [later fall apart as hoaxes](#). In 2015, for example, two teenagers in Chester County, Pa., claimed they had found needles in their candy, but they [recanted their stories days later](#).

"I can't find any evidence of any child being killed or seriously hurt by a contaminated treat picked up in the course of trick-or-treating," Mr. Best said.

He found five deaths that had been attributed to Halloween sadism, all of which later proved to have unrelated causes. One child died in 1970, after eating heroin that the police originally said had been in his Halloween candy; it later emerged that he had [found the heroin in a relative's home](#). An 8-year-old died after eating cyanide-laced candy, but he had gotten the candy from his father, who was [convicted and executed for the murder](#).

One related example had nothing to do with Halloween. In 2018, the strawberry industry in Australia was affected after some people, including a 7-year-old girl who was not physically harmed, found needles in their fruit. For months, supermarkets pulled strawberries from their shelves, and eventually a supervisor at a strawberry farm in Queensland [was arrested](#); charges against her were [dropped this July](#).

As for the marijuana treats, Mr. Best said he hadn't seen any confirmed reports of children being sickened by them. But warnings from police departments have often been repeated in local media outlets in recent years.

"These treats can look like traditional candies, but can have harmful effects if consumed by a child," the Drug Enforcement Administration's St. Louis division wrote in 2018. "The D.E.A. and law enforcement agencies throughout the country have seen an increase of seizures of drug-laced edibles, including but not limited to chocolates, suckers and gummies."

It continued: "The D.E.A. St. Louis Division has not identified any specific threats but issues this as an advisory."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Joined anti-govt militia using govt. emails
SOURCE	https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/oath-keepers-investigation-public-employees-1246358/
GIST	<p>What kind of person signs up for an antigovernment militia with a government-issued email address? The answer is surprising, revealing — and, as one extremism expert puts it, “really alarming.”</p> <p>The purported membership of the Oath Keeper membership rolls — obtained in a hack and leaked to the transparency group Distributed Denial of Secrets — include more than 38,000 names. The vast majority of alleged members are enrolled in a way that leaves them somewhat anonymous: Their registrations are associated with a gmail or other private email address.</p> <p>But a review by <i>Rolling Stone</i> identified nearly 40 memberships linked to public-sector work emails, from domains like <i>nasa.gov</i>, <i>dmv.virginia.gov</i>, and <i>city.pittsburgh.pa.us</i>. <i>Rolling Stone</i> then matched these individuals to public-source information — from LinkedIn accounts, government websites, public salary</p>

databases, etc. — to compile a list of everyday Americans who appear to have been dues paying members of the notorious right-wing organization.

Think of them as the [Oath Keepers](#) next door. Their ranks include more than a handful of law enforcement officers. But, in full, they cut across a broader cross section of society, including employees of the Treasury Department, Los Alamos National Laboratory, the Veterans Administration, as well as local government workers ranging from fire fighters to auto mechanics to public school employees.

“This is an organization that recruits from law enforcement and military. That is kind of their cause,” says Alex Friedfeld, an investigative researcher at the Center on Extremism, housed at the Anti-Defamation League. “Yet civilians are signing up — not folks who you would normally think would be part of the target demographic. What this shows,” he says, “is how the Oath Keeper ideology, and the broader militia-movement ideology, has permeated through society.”

Making exceptions for individuals who hold, or have held, high-ranking jobs of public trust, *Rolling Stone* is not individually identifying these purported Oath Keepers by name. But these records underscore how the militia group has gone mainstream.

The Oath Keepers ideology is steeped in conspiracy theories. The militia asks its members to defend America from federal tyranny, and swear to defy “unconstitutional orders,” which they imagine with feverish foresight. (For example: “We will NOT obey any order to blockade American cities, thus turning them into giant concentration camps.”) Membership in the organization is not illegal. But militia activities by Oath Keeper members have long been suspect. The Oath Keepers are infamous for vigilantism — including showing up toting guns in moments of social unrest. More than 20 Oath Keepers have been charged for participating in the siege of the U.S. Capitol on [January 6th](#) that sought to block President Joe Biden from assuming office.

The Oath Keepers organization has not responded to questions about the hack or its data. The leaked records, which date back as far as 2009, do not indicate which memberships are current — although some individuals are listed as “life” members. (Oath Keeper memberships today cost \$50 a year, or \$1,000 for life.) The leaked rolls have been reported on by media outlets including [USA Today](#), the [Daily Dot](#), [ProPublica](#) and [Oregon Public Broadcasting](#), as well as by [Rolling Stone](#). This reporting has identified dozens of members of the military and law enforcement, as well as Republicans in elected office, as Oath Keeper members. A number of these individuals have gone on record confirming their affiliations.

At least one individual who appears to have signed up for the Oath Keepers using his public work credentials made no secret of his ideology. Robin Cole is the former Sheriff of Pine County Minnesota, north of Minneapolis. The leaked records show him joining in 2013, when he was sheriff — about the same time he sent an open letter to constituents pledging not to enforce any new federal or state gun restrictions, decrying them as an erosion of freedom and a “[moral sin](#).” Reached by telephone, Cole confirmed his identity but hung up after this reporter began asking about his inclusion on the alleged Oath Keeper rolls. The Pine County Sheriff’s Department — reached on the telephone number listed with Cole’s apparent membership — declined to comment for this story.

Several less-high ranking officers also appeared to sign up for the Oath Keepers with their government-issue email addresses. They include an officer in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, police department; a recently retired police detective from Wyoming; a former member of the sheriff’s department from Hamilton County, Tennessee; and a former member of the Texas State Guard, who noted on his purported membership that he was, “Extremely worried about the current state of government and the disdain for the US Constitution and general US and WORLD Rule of LAW.”

Leaving aside law enforcement members, the list becomes professionally diverse. There are current and former firefighters from Seattle; Columbus, Ohio; Huntsville, Alabama; and Lexington, Kentucky. The list includes a supervisor with the federal Department of Homeland Security, and a county-level homeland security director in Tennessee.

The other federal employees on the purported Oath Keeper rolls are a grab bag. They include a research engineer at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, a communications professional from NASA, an FAA air traffic systems specialist from Arizona, a staff member at the Treasury's Department of Public Debt in West Virginia, a physician at the Veterans' Administration in Alabama, and a retired Air Marshall from Las Vegas.

State workers are similarly eclectic — including a supervisor at California's Department of Water Resources, an assistant supervisor in the Kentucky Department of Corrections, an instructor at a state rehabilitation center in Virginia, and a criminal investigator with the Louisiana Department of Justice.

At the local level, the purported Oath Keeper list includes a school resource officer from central Indiana; individuals with school-district emails from central North Carolina and the Florida panhandle; a former recreation services employee from Wasilla, Alaska; an auto mechanic in Cincinnati, Ohio; a superintendent of solid waste management in Maryland, and civilian employees in the police departments of Huntsville, Alabama, and Washington D.C.

Rolling Stone emailed each of the public employees at their work addresses seeking comment. Nobody wrote back. (A few are now defunct and could not be delivered.)

Friedfeld, the extremism investigator, says the Oath Keepers' recruiting rhetoric sometimes draws in people with a limited understanding of the group's militant M.O. "On the surface, the way these guys talk of patriotism and constitutionality, can seem reasonable," he says. And there are some people, Friedfeld adds, "who sign up initially and then learn a little bit more about what's actually happening and go, 'Oh, no. I'm out.'"

One prominent Texas public employee, contacted by *Rolling Stone*, can't figure out how he ended up on the alleged Oath Keeper rolls in the first place. The state comptroller's office has a criminal division that investigates tax fraud. Institutionally pro-government, its mission is to ensure that Texas isn't cheated out of lawful revenue. Jim Harris, now the criminal division's Chief of Police, appears on the leaked membership list as having joined in 2013, using an email with the bureau's internet domain at the time, *cpa.state.tx.us*.

Harris didn't respond directly to *Rolling Stone*, but Chris Bryan, a spokesperson for the comptroller's office, says Harris denies participating in the group, or ever paying dues: "Chief Harris is not a member of the organization, and doesn't recall ever being a member of the organization," Bryan says, adding: "His position is that he may have put his email address on a form at some point 10 years ago, but has never been a member of the organization."

Yet many other Americans appear to join the Oath Keepers with their eyes wide open. The NASA employee, for example, added a note about how he might be useful to the militia, bragging of: "Firearms training, general preparedness, wilderness first aid [and] general combat training." The Pittsburgh police officer appended a note highlighting his experience as a firearms instructor, and adding that he would "spread the word to my students."

"It's really alarming," Friedfeld says. "Seemingly ordinary people are signing up for the Oath Keepers because they think that tyranny is coming." They've adopted a conspiratorial worldview, he says, that the federal government "has been co-opted by forces that are planning to do bad things — to them or their family or their communities."

These folks want to stand up, Friedfeld adds, but they don't see any avenues for action in politics, community organizing, or other facets of civil life. "They think the solution is joining with this militant group — to protect their way of life."

[Return to Top](#)

SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3204301/washington-ag-lawsuit-conspiracy-chicken-manufacturers/
GIST	<p>Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson announced Tuesday that his office has filed a lawsuit over what he alleges to be a “sweeping conspiracy” involving nearly 20 major chicken manufacturers.</p> <p>Ferguson names 19 chicken producers in his lawsuit, claiming that they had inflated prices, “rigged contract bids,” and manufactured supply shortages. Those companies — which include Tyson Foods, Sanderson Farms, and Perdue Farms, among others — distribute an estimated 95% of the country’s so-called “broiler chickens,” used for chicken breasts at grocery stores, chicken nuggets, and sandwiches at fast food chains.</p> <p>“If you’ve eaten chicken in the last decade, this conspiracy touched your wallet,” Ferguson said in a news release. “This conspiracy cost middle-class and low-income Washington families more money to put food on their table.”</p> <p>“I will hold these companies accountable for the profits they illegally made off the backs of hardworking Washington families,” he added.</p> <p>Ferguson’s allegations date back to 2008, claiming that the companies named in his lawsuit “coordinated to reduce production, ... resulting in significant production cuts and higher prices.” That effort was said to have been managed “through press releases and investor calls,” as well as at investment bank conferences and trade meetings with senior executives in attendance.</p> <p>Ferguson’s 96-page filing in King County Superior Court asks that “restitution” be paid to Washington consumers and businesses “to the maximum extent” allowed under state law. It also seeks additional civil penalties over the companies’ alleged violations.</p> <p>If the companies are found to be in violation of Washington’s antitrust laws, they could each be subject to a maximum fine of \$900,000, as well as \$7,500 in civil penalties.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 China controls thoughts beyond its borders
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/oct/26/we-are-so-divided-now-how-china-controls-thought-and-speech-beyond-its-borders
GIST	<p>It was a pleasant, breezy day in late September 2020 when the FBI showed up outside the home of a man named Baimadajie Angwang. Angwang, who lived in Long Island with his wife and two-year-old daughter, was a community liaison officer with the New York police department, where his role was to build relations with the neighbourhood in the 111th precinct in Queens. He had arrived in the US in 2005, a 17-year-old asylum-seeker from a Tibetan enclave in China. He joined the marines in 2009 and served one tour in Afghanistan. And then, in 2019, he showed up at the Tibetan Community Center in Queens.</p> <p>He wanted to be part of the community, Angwang told people. He was there to help Tibetan immigrant youth. He was also, according to the charges against him, in regular contact with two members of the Chinese consulate. “Let them know,” he had told a consular official in November 2018, “that you have recruited someone in the police department.”</p> <p>Certainly, if he was a spy, as charged, he wasn’t a very good one. According to the documents that outline the charges against him, he contacted consular officials on his personal mobile phone, placing calls while FBI officials were listening in. In the recordings released to the court, Angwang flatters and brags. “I’m thinking, the whole world is promoting diversity,” he tells a man referred to as PRC OFFICIAL-2, suggesting they approach minority groups in the Tibetan community to recruit informants. Angwang tries to convince the official to get him a visa to go back and visit China. Other informants will want them, he says. They will think the PRC doesn’t appreciate them. Especially, he says, the “100%-type” – the real believers. “It is hard to find people like us,” he complains. “So enthusiastic.”</p>

Enthusiasm aside, Angwang seemed to have little real intelligence to offer. The charges filed shortly before he was taken into custody testify to his relatively lowly status. He is facing allegations of wire fraud, making false statements and of acting as an unregistered foreign agent: a section of the US criminal code widely known as “espionage light”. Of the many questions raised by Angwang’s case, perhaps the most striking is why the Chinese consulate would have bothered talking to him at all.

In the past nine years under Xi Jinping’s leadership, the Chinese Communist party (CCP) has thrown itself into what Freedom House, a US-based human rights NGO, calls “transnational repression”. Every arm of the PRC government has been called upon to join in the work of influencing opinions, stifling speech and controlling dissent within and beyond its borders. In a tally of direct physical attacks originating from China since 2014, a [recent Freedom House report](#) uncovered 214 incidents in 36 different countries, from abductions in Thailand to physical assaults in Canada – far more than any other country in the study.

More numerous than these blatant attacks are the incidences of harassment and intimidation. Exiles and activists all over the world have reported threatening phone calls and cyber-attacks; Chinese students studying in the [UK](#) and [Australia](#) have reported being threatened and harassed if they criticise the PRC; in California, a man was apprehended driving a car made to look like a Chinese police vehicle through an immigrant neighbourhood; police officers in the PRC frequently make calls to exiles using their relative’s phones (“You must bear in mind that all your family and relatives are with us,” a Chinese officer [told one Uyghur exile](#) from China’s Xinjiang province). “China conducts the most sophisticated, global, and comprehensive campaign of transnational repression in the world,” reads the Freedom House report. Of the groups targeted for repression, Tibetans in exile have long been the object of special attention.

Globally, there are about 150,000 Tibetans living outside China’s borders. It’s a small group with an outsized international voice, partly thanks to their charismatic leader, the Dalai Lama. The People’s Republic of China took control of Tibet in 1950, and the Dalai Lama escaped to Dharamshala, India, in 1959, where he set up the Tibetan government in exile. Ever since, the Tibetan diaspora has been growing and the PRC has viewed the Tibetan people – with their allegiance to a leader outside the Communist party system and an independence movement with [global support](#) – as a dangerous enemy.

One of the biggest Tibetan diaspora communities outside Dharamshala is in and around New York City, where an estimated 15,000 Tibetans live. In Jackson Heights, Queens, Tibetan restaurants and groceries line the streets around the Roosevelt Avenue subway station. There is a community centre, opened in 2019, a temple and a school for Tibetan language and culture. Along a stretch of 74th Street that is hung with strings of lights, Tibetan and Nepali restaurants share sidewalk space, prayer flags flutter, and a discount shop is named Namaste.

Angwang’s arrest seemed to confirm what the Tibetan community had long suspected: that the Communist party of China is watching them. Tibetans in New York applying for visas to visit China are directed to a separate entrance to the PRC consulate in the city, where an official – usually of Tibetan descent – meets them for an extensive interview. They are asked to write a biography, listing all their friends and family in Tibet, along with their jobs, addresses and contact information. Many worry that their applications could harm loved ones in China. They fear their daily activities are documented and tallied. Some applicants have been shown photos of themselves attending a protest, or a teaching led by the [Dalai Lama](#). In one case, a visa applicant in San Francisco found that the interviewer knew the name and breed of their dog.

“We go between overestimating and underestimating the threat (of surveillance),” said Tenzin Dorjee, a PhD student in political science at Columbia and one of the most recognisable faces in New York’s Tibetan community. Dorjee goes by the name Tendor – many Tibetan boys are given one of the Dalai Lama’s names (he has seven), so nicknames are common. Tendor was the child of Tibetan exiles in India and moved to the US as a teenager. He spent four years as the director of Students for a Free Tibet, where PRC surveillance was considered a given.

Tendor has watched as paranoia has grown in his community. Tibetans, he believes, are brave, but in the last decade the PRC has managed to exploit their vulnerabilities: their ties to family and friends still in China, and their hopes of obtaining visas to visit Tibet. The PRC has sowed divisions and left Tibetans in

exile frightened and suspicious of each other. “You can basically have no spies in the community,” Tendor told me, “as long as you create the perception that there are spies in the community.”

Not long after Angwang’s arrest, I met Tendor at a restaurant in Jackson Heights. It was a cold November night and when I arrived, he was sitting outside with two friends, beers on the table in front of them, hats on their heads. Tendor wears rectangular glasses and has a narrow face. A man named Lobsang Tara sat next to him, a mask hanging from one ear, and across the table, the current head of Students for a Free Tibet, Dorjee Tseten, was leaning forward over his empty plate, hands in his pockets. The community was in uproar. Tara was wondering if Angwang really was Tibetan at all. He had met Angwang at a restaurant one night a few months before the arrest. Angwang didn’t look Tibetan, Tara said – he was too pale. He didn’t act Tibetan. (“We’re more ... disordered,” Tara told me.)

Across Queens, Tibetan groups were rushing to distance themselves from the alleged spy. “The way he spoke!” Tara said. “Not one clean word of Tibetan came out of his mouth!”

A few weeks earlier, the Tibetan Community Association of New York and New Jersey had held a press conference to explain why Angwang had been attending their meetings. “We knew he was a pro-communist type of guy,” one board member of the association told me. “But we never suspected he could be a spy.” When the New York Post contacted the former head of the board – a man named Sonam Gyephel – he protested that they had shared nothing important with Angwang. “We didn’t give any information to him,” said Gyephel. “We gave him nothing. Nothing.”

Tendor had crossed paths with Angwang once, at the 2019 Losar, or Tibetan New Year, celebration held at the Tibetan Community Center in Queens. That night the guest of honour had been Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the new congresswoman representing Queens, and she had been [photographed with Angwang](#), playing with his baby daughter, the two of them wrapped in a single ceremonial white scarf. Now people wanted to know how the community leaders had allowed an alleged spy to sit next to a congresswoman. (“She was bored and went to go play with the baby,” Tendor said. “Sometimes these community events can drag on.”) People had read the FBI affidavit and seen the references to their celebrations, the minority groups in their midst, and the places where they spent time. It was chilling to see their community dissected and discussed like a puzzle to be solved. “They knew us,” Tendor told me.

Despite all the stories circulating about encounters with Angwang – short conversations in broken Tibetan, brief meetings in restaurants and at local events – few people in the community knew much about him. The handful of Tibetans who knew Angwang well had met him some time ago. No one I spoke with wanted their names associated with the alleged spy, but they painted a picture of a stocky, muscular young man who was full of bravado. He flashed money clips and bragged about his parents’ success in China. He was also struggling to adapt to his new home.

According to court documents, Angwang was born in the lowlands, below the Tibetan plateau and outside the Tibetan Autonomous Region, in an area of China’s Sichuan province known as Zitsa Degu in Tibetan, or Jiuzhaigou in Mandarin. It’s a place of natural beauty where Chinese tourists come to spend their holidays hiking to waterfalls. It was also part of the Tibetan region where, in 1956, the first uprisings were staged against communist rule. Today, however, the economy in the area is controlled by ethnic Han Chinese and the demographics have changed. “His town is already 80% Chinese,” one of Angwang’s early acquaintances told me. And because the Tibetan population is small, crackdowns are rare. “It’s culturally part of China,” the friend said. “They feel confident about it and go easy on it.”

Ethnic Tibetans from this area speak a local dialect, and their complexion is different from that of Tibetans living on the plateau. So, people would later argue, it was not so strange that Angwang would not speak standard Tibetan, and unsurprising that he looked a little different. Angwang went to high school in Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan province. “He said his teachers and classmates would taunt and exclude him,” one of his acquaintances told me. “They’d say things like ‘Tibetans are dirty’.” Angwang would get so angry that he would take off his clothes and dare them to smell him. In his 2005 asylum

application, Angwang said he had been imprisoned unlawfully in Sichuan. He said he had been targeted because of his ethnicity, and that he had been tortured while in jail.

Angwang approached the Tibetan Community Association of New York and New Jersey sometime in November 2018. He had called Gyephel's cell phone (which was the number listed on the association's website) and offered a refrain that he would repeat until his arrest: he worked for the NYPD, he was concerned about the state of Tibetan youth in the city, and he was there to help. He didn't speak much Tibetan, but the board didn't ask. Here was a Tibetan man in a uniform – a story of success and acceptance in the US.

"We don't want to get stuck in our own small community," a former board member told me, trying to explain why they welcomed Angwang in. "We want to be part of the larger city. We want to get connected with everybody."

According to the Freedom House report, the PRC's influence campaigns abroad target ethnic minorities and dissidents on a global scale unmatched by any other nation. Their activities, it reports, are best understood as functions of the United Front Working Department (UFWD), a nebulous part of China's bureaucracy that oversees all activities aimed at influencing groups not directly controlled by the CPC, inside China and out. These can be civil society organisations, media groups, academics, dissidents or Uyghurs from [China's Xinjiang region](#). They can also be Tibetans. The official on the other end of the phone with Angwang in the FBI recordings was a member of the China Association for Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture – a group overseen by the United Front.

Under President Xi, the United Front Working Department has been in the ascendant. In September 2014, borrowing a term from Mao, Xi called united front work a "magic weapon", and launched an effort to reform and increase its power. United Front Work, Xi has said, will help to unite the Chinese people under a single worldview and in a common cause.

The United Front aims to influence Chinese citizens and foreigners, its methods including intelligence gathering, silencing dissent, and cultural exchange. The agencies involved in united front work include the propaganda department and the ministry of education. "Xi Jinping has emphasised that 'the United Front is about working on people,'" [wrote Alex Joske](#) of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in a 2020 report titled *The Party Speaks for You*. "Co-opting and manipulating elites, influential individuals and organisations is a way to shape discourse and decision-making." Teng Biao, a human rights lawyer and scholar living in New Jersey, puts it another way: "They don't want to hear any criticism and they don't want to see independent civil societies which are out of control," he told me. "They are sending the message that they are everywhere. Nowhere is out of reach."

Because of the scope of United Front work, it can be difficult to track. There are explicit examples of harassment and abduction. Operation Fox Hunt – an effort to track down and repatriate a list of "most wanted" Chinese dissidents and exiles living abroad – has involved the intimidation and stalking of multiple targets in the US. Internationally, the PRC claims to have located and repatriated 8,000 international "fugitives" accused of financial crimes. (The same year that Angwang was arrested, the FBI apprehended seven people in New Jersey for [harassing and stalking](#) a Chinese exile living in the suburbs.)

There are also subtler United Front operations. The China Association for the Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture – of which Angwang's consulate contact was a member – once sponsored a Tibet exhibit at a Queens library focusing on the PRC's positive role in the region. It was shut down [after protests](#) from the Tibetan community. In 2014, an official from the association [was banned](#) from the UN Council on Human Rights after intimidating and photographing a woman named Ti-Anna Wang, who was there to testify about the abduction and imprisonment of her father, a pro-democracy activist.

The difficulty of measuring or combating the United Front is maybe most evident in the formation of Chinese Students and Scholars Associations at universities across the world. For the most part the CSSA provides uncomplicated support to Chinese students living abroad, such as listservs that help new arrivals

find roommates, sell furniture or join study groups. Most Chinese migrants or students will connect with the consulate in a way that is harmless, says Yaqiu Wang, a researcher with Human Rights Watch. In many cases, however, the CSSA is connected and directed by the local Chinese consulate. Students may meet United Front officers while applying for visas, attending consular dinners (the consulates, she noted, always offer the best Chinese food), or joining organisations that help new arrivals build a community.

According to Wang, some students have then been asked to keep tabs on their friends and classmates. “You grow up in China, you understand that not criticising the government, not standing up to the government is good for you,” Wang said. “There is this relationship going on ... you understand that it is good for you if you are close to the consulate.”

For years, Tibetans in India and the US felt buffered from the influence of the Communist party of China. Tendor’s parents escaped Tibet soon after the Dalai Lama fled China in 1959, and settled in the Kullu valley a few hours’ drive from Dharamshala. They both worked in one of a string of boarding schools established by the Dalai Lama’s sister. Tendor was born in 1980 and grew up steeped in Tibetan history and prayer. In the school’s central courtyard, students would put on plays about the Tibetan revolt of 1959 – one in a string of uprisings and crackdowns that saw an estimated 6,000 monasteries destroyed and tens of thousands of Tibetans killed over the course of 15 years. At school in India, Tendor spoke in Tibetan and worked on his English. Twice a day, in the morning and the evening, all the students attended prayer sessions. (“We all found this part of the day to be a drag,” Tendor joked.) Hardly anyone spoke Mandarin. Tibet seemed close, but China far away.

Inside Tibet, surveillance was increasing. After an attempt at rapprochement in the early 80s, when the Tibetan Autonomous Region was opened to tourism, demonstrations against Chinese rule were violently suppressed by the military, and martial law was declared in the region in 1989. It was around that time that new arrivals at Tendor’s boarding school in India told him what it had been like in their home villages: “Every crack in the wall is an ear.”

Over the years, China’s Tibet policy has combined investment and increased opportunity with military crackdowns and surveillance that has included cameras inside monasteries and 21,000 CPC cadres dispatched into Tibetan villages. A shrinking number of schools in Tibet allow instruction in Tibetan. The region experienced unrest before the Olympics in 2008. Starting in 2011, a series of self-immolations shocked some of the easternmost towns and villages.

When Tendor was a boy, surveillance was defined by informants, by people listening through the walls. Now, he said, it’s eyes – people reading your text messages, looking at your computers, and monitoring daily life in Tibet through CCTV cameras. Technology has made it easier to take surveillance beyond the PRC’s borders. In 2001, a leaked document outlined Beijing’s concern over the international Free Tibet movement. “It is difficult to reverse the present situation where the enemy’s fortune on the international arena is running high and ours low,” it read. By 2009, years before Xi’s rise to power, a group of Canadian researchers reported that China’s large-scale cyber espionage operation, [Ghostnet](#), had focused its attacks on Dharamshala.

In the past two decades, Tendor told me, these incursions have started to erode the security felt by Tibetans living outside China. “The PRC became much better at connecting people to their friends and family still in Tibet,” he told me. “So if you show up at a protest in New York, your family member might call you from China and say: please stop.”

This year marks the 70th anniversary of CCP control of Tibet. As part of China’s celebration, portraits of Xi have been hung throughout monasteries and homes (portraits of the Dalai Lama have long been banned). Tibetans have stopped arriving in Nepal. Even in India, Tibetans have been arrested in advance of the arrival of PRC government officials. In September, authorities in Sichuan [arrested](#) more than 100 Tibetans for possessing pictures of the Dalai Lama, for “discussing social issues”, and for sharing messages and information with the community outside China.

If convicted, Angwang would not be the first spy to be caught reporting on the activities of a Tibetan exile community. In 2017, the Swedish government [arrested a spy](#) who had spent years tracking the movements of Tibetans all over Europe. The man, [Dorjee Gyantsan](#), had long been a part of a tiny population of about 140 Tibetans in Stockholm. Gyantsan had probably connected with a Chinese agent on an international ferry from Sweden to Finland. He collected information on Tibetan immigrants in Sweden, Poland and Denmark, providing information on their living situations, their families and their travel plans to a Chinese embassy official in Warsaw. He was convicted of “illegal intelligence activity” in 2018 and was deported back to China last year.

After arriving in New York City from Sichuan, Angwang, according to his friends at the time, had struggled. He was young and conflicted about his identity. He would approach groups of Tibetans on the street and, when they found he could not speak Tibetan, only Mandarin, they would politely excuse themselves. He could not access the community. Not long after being granted asylum in 2009, Angwang joined the marines and left the city.

When he returned to Queens in 2014, Angwang had been honourably discharged from the marines. In 2015, he met his future spouse. In 2016, they married and Angwang began working at the NYPD. In 2017, his daughter was born. And in 2018, Angwang started attending the community association board meetings. He was outspoken and liked to project an air of authority. It did not take long before other members of the board started to find him off-putting. In one incident, Angwang approached a member of the board and asked him why he was wearing a jacket with “Free Tibet” written on the back. “You’re an up-and-coming type of guy,” Angwang had said. “Why would you wear a jacket like that?”

Later, Angwang showed up in uniform at the new community centre. “He said he was just swinging by,” the same board member recalled. Angwang motioned to the police cruiser outside and said he wanted to show his partner the new centre. He gestured to the set of flags hanging at the entrance. “Why do you keep the Tibetan flag up outside with the American flag?” Angwang asked. “If I were you, I wouldn’t put up the Tibetan flag.” He said that there were some big businessmen who were interested in giving money to the centre. “If you put up that Tibetan flag,” Angwang warned. “You might not get that kind of donation.”

The board member listened quietly. He did not nod, but he didn’t argue. “It was kind of a friendly suggestion,” he told me. “But the seed of suspicion was sown.” Tibetans are proud of their flag, which is illegal in Tibet. “This gentleman is saying he’s a Tibetan,” the man recounted, “and he’s asking us to put down the flag.”

Angwang declined to participate in this article, but his lawyer, John Carman, told me that these incidents had been misunderstood. Angwang was worried not about the Tibetan flag, but the fact that it was hanging without a US flag above it. He worried that a photograph of himself in uniform with a flag, or a Free Tibet logo, would suggest the support of the entire NYPD. He wanted to avoid politics, not find himself involved in the tensions between the US and China.

No matter the reason for his comments, board members had lost trust in Angwang. He had made too many members uncomfortable. Finally, on the same day that Angwang was photographed with Ocasio-Cortez at the Losar celebration, he attended a lunar new year gala at the Chinese consulate. For the Tibetan Association of New York and New Jersey, this was the last straw. They stopped taking his calls. If the consulate was hoping for revelatory new intelligence or even a long-term informant, Angwang was not their man. But even bad spies can be useful.

No one knows exactly when or why Angwang started communicating with PRC officials at the Chinese consulate. In legal documents, Carman argues that anyone with access to the entirety of the FBI tapes would understand: all Angwang was doing was trying to get a visa so he could return to China and visit his parents. He was not a sinister agent, but a man who wanted to take his daughter home to meet her grandparents. (A spokesperson for the Chinese consulate in New York said [in a statement](#) after Angwang’s arrest that consulate staff “have been conducting normal exchanges with various sectors of society in its consular district ... Their work is above board and beyond reproach.”)

According to Lobsang Tara, Angwang's reasons for informing are irrelevant. Everyone in the Tibetan community wants to go home. Visas, he told me, are "the achilles heel of the Tibetan people". Not everyone, however, is in regular phone contact with consular officials. Tara grew up in Tibet, in a small village of 60 people. After an uprising in 1987, when Tara was 13, his father sent him to India on a journey over the Himalayas that meant two weeks of walking, river-crossings and cold nights sleeping rough.

In 1998, Tara trekked back over the mountains and sneaked into Tibet. His grandmother had been heartbroken when she heard he had left for India, but when he returned she spent the first afternoon convinced that he was an impostor sent to inform on the family. Once she was reassured, it was a happy reunion, but Tara worried he would attract attention, and so he returned to India. He hasn't seen his family since.

Tara came to the US in 2002 and has worked selling shoes and driving cars, and as an interpreter for Tibetan officials travelling to the US. He went to film school and made documentaries about Tibetans. He worked with Tendro at Students for a Free Tibet. And then, he told me, the idea of getting a visa – and a chance to visit his home – lodged in his heart. He tamped down his activism. When he first arrived at the Chinese consulate in New York City for an interview, however, he was led to the back door of the consulate and taken into an interview room. The interviewer asked questions about his family, his activism and his acquaintances. They asked for phone numbers and addresses. Tara was careful with his answers, but his visa was denied. He has so far changed his name six times to try to make it through the application process. "I belong to the Li family now," he told me.

Following Angwang's exile from the Tibetan Community Association of New York and New Jersey, he started approaching other community groups. One was the Tibetan Service Center in Queens, which focuses on preserving cultural heritage. At first, the director of the centre, Tsering Diki, saw Angwang as a kindred spirit. "A lot of people are working on the political side," Diki told me. "Every day they want to talk about a free Tibet. Then there is another group of people like me who want to dedicate themselves to preserving the culture and making the community outside Tibet stronger."

When Diki met Angwang, she thought he had similar goals. Not long after they met, he called her and told her about an event that was part of Asia Pacific Heritage Month in May 2019. He complained that Chinese performers were planning to represent Tibet. "He told me that the Chinese were always there misrepresenting the Tibetan Culture," she said. So Diki volunteered a dance group from the Tibetan Service Center, and the event, she felt, was a huge success. "He was right, there was a Chinese group there performing a very fake Tibetan dance," she told me. Diki's group had the chance to present something more authentic. "So I felt, oh my God, we kind of saved our culture!"

Diki's good relationship with Angwang would not last. In late 2019, Angwang started asking Diki why she featured the Tibetan flag and a portrait of the Dalai Lama at the centre. At first, Diki changed the subject whenever he brought it up. When he kept asking, she felt she couldn't keep ignoring it. Diki stopped answering his calls.

Diki, who was born in Tibet and arrived in the US as a college student, has herself faced growing suspicion from other Tibetans in Jackson Heights. In recent years, she has led an annual group trip for Tibetan exiles back to Tibet. It took her many years, she told me, to obtain tourist visas for her group. She had tried Chinese travel agencies, but none of them could help her. "They would be excited to help you. Then they would find out you were Tibetan Americans and ditch you right there," she told me. Diki begged a friend who organised tour groups in Lhasa to help her, and was granted her first set of visas in 2014. The itinerary she developed was strictly cultural. "We had a tour guide and there were five or six United Front officers sleeping in our hotel until the day they dropped us off at the airport," she said.

Diki was thrilled to be showing Tibet to children who had been born in India or the US. But suspicions in New York's Tibetan community had grown. "People start questioning: why did that person get [the

visa]?” Tendor told me. Earlier this year, in a social media post, a Tibetan youth organisation accused Diki of being a spy and working with the Chinese consulate. She wrote a letter denying their accusations and threatened to take them to court. Now that Angwang has been accused of spying and tension are even higher, Diki is considering cancelling her summer trips for good.

“Sometimes I think: ‘Is there a lot of Chinese spy work involved?’” Diki told me. “We are so divided now, and that’s exactly what they want.”

Tendor sighs. Being Tibetan in exile is political – it’s inescapable. Shortly before the pandemic, Tendor was scheduled to speak at an event at Columbia university discussing PRC surveillance, but it was shut down after students from the PRC threatened to protest.

Angwang was no mastermind. He had cracked no codes and unveiled no revolutionary plots. But in Queens, it didn’t matter. His arrest reminded people that the PRC is watching. Today, Angwang is out on bail and awaiting trial. Whether or not he is guilty, the question of spying on communities is creating difficulties in US-China relations.

Tara has started a business selling Tibetan-style beef jerky and barley. With fewer Tibetans making it over the border, Tendor feels responsible for making sure that his daughter will speak Tibetan. It is difficult, however, to find books and videos to show her. (There is one, at least, with a yak that pops up in the Tibetan alphabet.)

China is changing rapidly. But change, Tendor pointed out, isn’t always for the better. “I do not know how to fix it,” Tara told me. “You live life with this fear under everything you do. I have American friends who can talk freely, and even as they are talking freely, I have this fear underneath.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 UN: window for climate action ‘closing’
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/oct/26/world-wasted-chance-build-back-better-covid-un
GIST	<p>The world is squandering the opportunity to “build back better” from the Covid-19 pandemic, and faces disastrous temperature rises of at least 2.7C if countries fail to strengthen their climate pledges, according to a report from the UN.</p> <p>Tuesday’s publication warns that countries’ current pledges would reduce carbon by only about 7.5% by 2030, far less than the 45% cut scientists say is needed to limit global temperature rises to 1.5C, the aim of the Cop26 summit that opens in Glasgow this Sunday.</p> <p>António Guterres, the UN secretary-general, described the findings as a “thundering wake up call” to world leaders, while experts called for drastic action against fossil fuel companies.</p> <p>Although more than 100 countries have promised to reach net zero emissions around mid-century, this would not be enough to stave off climate disaster, according to the UN emissions report, which examines the shortfall between countries’ intentions and actions needed on the climate. Many of the net zero pledges were found to be vague, and unless accompanied by stringent cuts in emissions this decade would allow global heating of a potentially catastrophic extent.</p> <p>Guterres said: “The heat is on, and as the contents of this report show, the leadership we need is off. Far off. Countries are squandering a massive opportunity to invest Covid-19 fiscal and recovery resources in sustainable, cost-saving, planet-saving ways. As world leaders prepare for Cop26, this report is another thundering wake-up call. How many do we need?”</p> <p>Inger Andersen, the executive director of the UN Environment Programme (Unep), which produced the report, said: “Climate change is no longer a future problem. It is a now problem. To stand a chance of limiting global warming to 1.5C, we have eight years to almost halve greenhouse gas emissions: eight</p>

years to make the plans, put in place the policies, implement them and ultimately deliver the cuts. The clock is ticking loudly.”

Emissions fell by about 5.4% last year [during Covid lockdowns](#), the report found, but [only about a fifth of the spending](#) on economic recovery was geared to efforts that would cut carbon. This failure to [“build back better”](#) despite promises by governments around the world cast doubt on the world’s willingness to make the economic shift necessary to tackle the climate crisis, the UN said.

In the run-up to [Cop26](#), countries were supposed to submit national plans on emissions cuts – called [nationally determined contributions \(NDCs\)](#) – for the next decade, a requirement under the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

But the Unep report found only half of countries had submitted new NDCs, with big emitters including China and India still to publish their plans, and several other governments – including Russia, Brazil, Australia and Mexico – had presented weak plans that were no improvement on their 2015 Paris pledges.

Joanna Depledge, of the Cambridge Centre for Environment, Energy and Natural Resource Governance, said: “The picture painted by the report is grim: less than half of the NDCs are genuinely more ambitious than the first round submitted in 2015 or 2016.

“There is an ambition gap between country pledges and the cuts needed to limit temperature rise ... and even more troubling is an implementation gap – many large emitters are not even on track to meet their existing pledges.”

[Longer-term net zero pledges](#) for mid-century have now been adopted by 49 countries and the EU, putting about half of global emissions, half of GDCP and about a third of the global population under net zero pledges, according to the report, which took into account pledges made before the end of September.

But Andersen said net zero promises from governments were often vague or ambiguous. If these could be “made robust and implemented fully”, the world could shave 0.5C off the projected warming of 2.7C that Unep predicted, she said.

Joeri Rogelj, the director of research at the Grantham Institute, Imperial College London, said: “If implemented, current net zero targets would lower temperature projections for the next century by about half a degree – bringing central estimates close to 2C – yet still not in line with holding global warming well below 2C, let alone 1.5C.

“On the other hand, the report also highlights that in many cases countries’ near-term targets are not yet putting emissions a clear track towards achieving their net zero goals. This casts doubt on whether these targets will ever be achieved.”

Ed Miliband, the shadow business secretary, said: “It’s time for the government to start telling the truth about how far away we are from where we need to be in this decisive decade. This report makes clear there can be no shifting of the goalposts from action this decade to targets in the middle of this century. If we follow this course, we will fail to keep global warming to 1.5C and betray future generations.

“The window for action is closing, and it is critical that in the budget and the days ahead, the prime minister and the government step up to make [Cop26](#) the summit of climate delivery, not climate delay.” The emissions gap report also highlighted [methane](#), a powerful greenhouse gas that arises from animal husbandry, natural gas extraction and waste. The US, the EU and more than 20 other countries have [signed a pledge to reduce methane](#) globally by 30% this decade.

Unep said methane was the second biggest contributor to temperature rises, after carbon, and that about 20% of annual methane emissions could be [cut at little or no cost](#), for instance through better management of natural gas drilling, stopping flaring and capping old wells.

Myles Allen, a professor of geosystem science at the University of Oxford, has championed the idea of forcing fossil fuel companies and other big emitters to pay for the permanent storage of the carbon they emit, through a [“carbon takeback obligation”](#), using carbon capture and storage technology.

He said: “On current progress, we’ll close the 2030 emissions gap some time in the 2080s. There is no appetite for reducing fossil fuel consumption globally at the rate required. The only remaining option is to scale up safe and permanent disposal of carbon dioxide, such as storing it back underground, instead of fly-tipping it into the atmosphere.”

[Return to Top](#)

Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Rising murder rate: cities pay shooters
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/to-fight-rising-murder-rate-more-cities-find-mentor-and-pay-likely-shooters-11635336000
GIST	<p>FRESNO, Calif.—Earlier this year, a 17-year-old named Devrick Hill was arrested on suspicion of firing multiple firearms out of a car in a conflict between gang members.</p> <p>He was also recruited for a program that provides mentoring, job training, and a stipend of up to \$1,000 a month in exchange for meeting goals that steer them away from violence, like completing classes or getting a job.</p> <p>The program, called Advance Peace Fresno, is trying to reverse a rising murder rate by offering fellowships to people identified as most likely to be involved in shootings.</p> <p>Nationwide, homicides rose nearly 30% in 2020 from the year earlier, according to Federal Bureau of Investigation data. More cities are trying to address the problem by focusing on small groups of people responsible for outsize amounts of gun violence. In Oakland, Calif., criminologists found in a 2019 report that one half of 1% of the city’s population was responsible for the majority of shootings.</p> <p>Advance Peace’s fellowship program is now running or set to launch soon in nine cities, including Rochester, N.Y.; Fort Worth, Texas; and Sacramento, Calif. Another 18 cities are using elements of the program, according to Advance Peace and law-enforcement officials.</p> <p>Some law-enforcement officials and political leaders have opposed the program.</p> <p>Advance Peace Fresno’s \$1.8 million budget comes from the city, state and nonprofit groups. Garry Bredefeld, a Republican city councilman, voted against funding the program because of the money provided to participants.</p> <p>“I don’t know why we would give people stipends to do the right thing,” he said. “That is complete insanity and a misuse of taxpayer funds.”</p> <p>Advocates say the stipends are important to keep participants engaged in the program.</p> <p>“I know a lot of people who got allowances growing up, I know a lot of people who got a little extra dough when they did well in school” said DeVone Boggan, chief executive of Advance Peace. “These guys haven’t had a childhood.”</p> <p>Mr. Boggan founded the program more than a decade ago in the Bay Area city of Richmond, Calif., to address a growing murder rate. He hired former gang members and ex-cons to identify and mentor young men who had spent time behind bars for shootings, had been shot themselves or were suspected in recent shootings.</p>

In the first five years of the program, 94% of the 68 fellows were alive, 79% hadn't been arrested or on gun-related charges, and 60% had received monetary incentives, according to an evaluation by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, a nonprofit research group.

Jason Corburn, a University of California, Berkeley professor who has evaluated the group's work in Sacramento and Stockton, Calif., said that over the course of an 18-month Advance Peace fellowship, less than \$20,000 is typically spent on a cohort of 30 to 50 individuals and an average of 20 to 50 shootings are prevented.

"If you were an economist, you'd say that's a great return on investment," he said.

Last year there were 732 shootings and 74 murders in Fresno, compared with 374 shootings and 45 murders in 2019. In June, city officials agreed to fund a local Advance Peace program for three years.

After Advance Peace launched in Fresno, it began identifying the most likely shooters with a list from police that included people with recent firearms arrests or those suspected in recent shootings, said its local program manager, Aaron Foster.

Over half of the murders in this city of 542,000 surrounded by farms are gang-related, said Lt. Andre Benson who heads the police department's gang unit. There are approximately 25,000 gang members or associates in Fresno, he said.

Mr. Foster, who used to be an active gang member and whose son and daughter were both shot to death, pored over the list with his employees, all of whom have been in gangs or grew up around them. They added some names and subtracted others; they now have 19 fellows aged 16 to 25.

Then came the hard part: getting gang members who get respect and money from their status as shooters to join the program.

Mr. Foster called 17-year-old Jaylin Johnson, whose nickname was "Lil Gunna" regularly, but couldn't get him to commit. In late December, Jaylin was shot and killed.

With Devrick, Mr. Foster believed the best approach was to send an employee named Roger Brown, nicknamed Syrup, to recruit him. Devrick is an aspiring rapper, and Syrup is a well-known hip-hop artist in Fresno.

Devrick's arrest for the shooting came as Syrup was trying to reel him in, a common occurrence, said Mr. Boggan. Fellows often don't stop shooting initially because it takes time for Advance Peace workers to become an influential force in their lives, he said.

Fresno police confirmed that Devrick was arrested earlier this year but declined to provide details on the status of his case because he was a minor.

To maintain credibility with the fellows, Advance Peace workers don't help with police investigations even when they know who is involved in shootings.

"Unfortunately, we've arrested several people that Advance Peace have tried to help," said Lt. Benson. "They understand that we have a job to do as well."

Devrick, whose nickname is "D Hill," said he first turned to gang life in ninth grade after his cousin was killed. He dropped out of school, leaving behind a promising high-school football career.

Since Devrick joined the program five months ago, Syrup has helped him find a place to live, re-enroll in school and join a job-training program. Last month, Syrup brought him into a studio to record a track

	<p>called “Insecurities,” which includes the lyrics, “You can’t blame me for my sins because I’m a better man today.”</p> <p>Devrick said he no longer wants to be known as a shooter.</p> <p>“When I was younger...I wanted to be called that,” he said. “Now I’d rather be low-key.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Mexico vacation spots: cartel battlefields
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/dream-vacation-hotspot-of-tulum-in-mexico-is-spiraling-into-a-deadly-cartel-battlefield?ref=home
GIST	<p>Two foreign female tourists were caught in a crossfire between rival crime groups and shot to death last Thursday in the high-end resort town of Tulum, Mexico. Three other people were also wounded when the firefight broke out in the popular restaurant, La Malquerida, not far from the beach. Of the two women who were killed, one was from Germany and the other India.</p> <p>“They were just in the wrong place at the wrong time, and got caught in an exchange of gunfire between competing drug traffickers,” said a high-ranking Mexican police commander, who agreed to speak with The Daily Beast on the condition of anonymity.</p> <p>“It’s a sad mistake for the victims, but such cases are not rare or unusual anymore [in and around Tulum]. When a firefight breaks out no one is safe,” the commander said.</p> <p>A playground for celebrities like Gwyneth Paltrow, Tulum is famous for its Mayan-era ruins and pristine beaches. But Tulum and the rest of the Riviera Maya are increasingly becoming inundated by cartel violence. An American firefighter was kidnapped and murdered from an all-inclusive resort in July. In June, another American was wounded in a shooting that killed two other people when gunmen opened fire from jet skis. A man was executed outside a law office in Cancun this August, prompting additional headlines about how violence “continues to take over” in the region.</p> <p>A report by Mexican news outlet <i>La Reforma</i>, from earlier this year, indicated that at least five cartels are now operating in the Riviera Maya and reports of violent crime in Tulum alone had gone up 783 percent since 2019.</p> <p>Mike Vigil, the DEA’s former chief of international operations, told The Daily Beast that the Riviera “has become a highly coveted area by the cartels, even more so recently because it is in the Yucatán Peninsula, which has a long coastline with little control by Mexico’s security forces.”</p> <p>“Logically in the struggle for power and drug trafficking routes the cartels desire tourist zones. There are many people all around, so it’s easier to disguise and move contraband and to launder money in the hotels and other businesses,” said the police commander.</p> <p><i>“Remember, once upon a time Acapulco was the go-to resort spot in Mexico—now it’s a nightmare of cartel violence.”</i></p> <p>He added that narcotics are brought into the coastal region from Central and South America using “airports, hidden landing strips, and by sea via go-fast boats that can elude the Mexican navy.”</p> <p>Dr. Robert J. Bunker, director of research and analysis at the security firm C/O Futures LLC, said Tulum has become “a cartel snake pit.”</p> <p>Bunker named the Jalisco New Generation Cartel and the Sinaloa Cartel as the two biggest players in the region. Smaller gangs such as the Pelones, Bonfil, and fragments of the once-mighty Zetas cartel also compete for revenue streams from a variety of underworld activities. The rackets include extortion,</p>

prostitution, local drug sales, and kidnapping, as well as “using ATM skimmers to rip off unsuspecting tourists,” Bunker said.

One of the most blatant smuggling strategies the cartels have adopted in the region is that of landing illicit planes bringing cocaine from Colombia and Venezuela. In at least one case, a jet laden with white gold even [landed on a public highway](#) to be unloaded.

“The closing of land borders because of COVID-19—and the pressure from the U.S. to crack down on migrant caravans—have caused Mexico to divert thousands of troops to its southern border,” said the DEA’s Vigil. “The increased presence of security forces on the border with Central America has created a significant shift to Quintana Roo [the state in which the Riviera Maya is located] [using jet aircraft](#).”

Security analyst Bunker said that cartel violence in major tourist centers in Mexico can be self-perpetuating, especially if international tourism begins to dry up because of it.

“This negatively impacts the local economies which cater to the tourists, which in turns lower the available pool of money local gangs are extorting from the businesses, which then raises violence levels, which furthers the downward cycle,” Bunker said. “Remember, once upon a time [Acapulco](#) was the go-to resort spot in Mexico—now it’s a nightmare of cartel violence. The danger is other tourist regions, such as the Mayan Riviera, now being on the same trajectory.”

This also echoes what has happened in Baja California—which is home to the high-end resorts around [Los Cabos](#), often frequented by celebs like George Clooney—as it too has become a popular corridor for drug trafficking into the U.S. This has led to Los Cabos becoming one of the [most violent cities in the world](#).

Although one man was apprehended near the Malquerida restaurant in Tulum after last Thursday’s deadly shootout, the other hitmen involved in the gun battle escaped. According to the police commander, it’s unlikely any further arrests will be made.

“The criminals will just move their operations to another part of town and the violence will go on. It will not stop. Tulum will continue to be targeted because the trafficking is very easy there for the cartels,” the commander said.

“It’s one of the best places in all of Mexico for sending drugs overland to the U.S.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Disgruntled neighbor killed 9; life term jail
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/disgruntled-neighbor-killed-arson-life-term-80792930
GIST	<p>AKRON, Ohio -- A man convicted of killing nine people in arson fires in his neighborhood was sentenced Tuesday to life in prison without parole for each death.</p> <p>Judge Christine Croce also ordered that Stanley Ford, of Akron, serve the terms consecutively.</p> <p>Ford, 62, has maintained his innocence. He was found guilty Sept. 21 of 26 of the 29 counts against him, including aggravated murder and aggravated arson. A jury recommended this month that he be sentenced to life in prison instead of the death penalty, although the judge had the final say.</p> <p>Besides the life terms for the murders, Croce also imposed an additional 21-year sentence for attempted aggravated murder with a violent offender specification.</p> <p>Ford did not speak at the sentencing. His lawyer — who asked the judge Tuesday to not impose consecutive terms — said Ford plans to appeal the sentence.</p> <p>Summit County prosecutors said Ford killed a couple in 2016 and two adults and five children in 2017. They used surveillance video footage, security alarm records and the testimony of neighbors to show Ford was responsible.</p>

	<p>Prosecutors said Ford set the fires because of disputes with his neighbors. Ford's attorney argued at trial that his client could not be identified in the surveillance videos and added that other potential suspects were identified.</p> <p>Ford's initial trial began in March 2020. After a week of testimony and several delays, Summit County Judge Christine Croce declared a mistrial the following June at the request of Ford's attorneys, who cited concerns about Ford's ability to get a fair trial during the coronavirus pandemic.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Mall shooting suspect known to police
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/bpd-press-conference-boise-towne-square-shooting/277-ba692f77-b995-48c8-8b5c-a18192415eae
GIST	<p>BOISE, Idaho — Following the fatal shooting at Boise Towne Square on Monday afternoon, the Boise Police Department (BPD) Chief Ryan Lee provided an update and preliminary information from their investigation into the shooting.</p> <p>During the press conference, Lee revealed that BPD had prior contact with the suspect but never arrested him.</p> <p>Three people, including the suspect, died as a result of the shooting. Three other people and a Boise police officer suffered from non-life-threatening injuries in the shooting.</p> <p>The suspect, who has been identified as 27-year-old Jacob Bergquist, died on Tuesday at a local hospital. The other two victims have been identified as 26-year-old Jo Acker of Caldwell and 49-year-old Robert Padilla Arguelles of Rupert.</p> <p>The victims' cause of death has not been released by the Ada County Coroner.</p> <p>Two of the other victims were identified as a 52-year-old woman and a 23-year-old woman, according to police. Both women were reportedly injured while inside a store and are recovering from non-life-threatening injuries.</p> <p>"My hearts go out to the families of Jo Acker and Robert Padilla," Lee said during Tuesday's press conference. "I can only imagine the grief the family is going through and the unexpected nature of this tragedy. My heart goes out to any of those that were directly affected and the family members of those directly affected."</p> <p>A 68-year-old woman was also shot and injured while she was inside her car. Her injuries are also non-life-threatening, according to police.</p> <p>Lee said the investigation is still in very early stages and added that BPD has been working with local, state and federal partners to process the crime scene.</p> <p>Boise Towne Square is under mall management and decisions on when the mall will reopen to the public will be made by managers.</p> <p>Police have not yet determined Berquist's motivation behind the shooting, but Lee said they are looking through his social media accounts and other digital property in hopes of understanding why Monday's shooting happened.</p> <p>Police executed a search warrant at a home on Fry Street in relation to the investigation on Tuesday. Items of interest have been taken from there, according to Lee.</p>

	<p>Boise police are conducting a multi-state effort to learn more about the suspect and is working with law enforcement partners "to investigate rumors and reports from social media."</p> <p>Lee said all evidence indicates Bergquist acted alone. He also addressed claims that Bergquist made violent threats online prior to the shooting, stating police have heard similar rumors.</p> <p>"Part of what we're doing is to capture all of [Bergquist's] electronic footprint and his social media. We've issued preservation orders to ensure that that information remains, that it's intact for us to analyze," Lee said. "We're going through to see whether or not that is fact or rumor at this time."</p> <p>While Bergquist's electronic footprint is not known to police at this time, Lee did reveal police made contact with him in the past. However, he said police never arrested him.</p> <p>"We had had contact with him in the past," Lee said. "We did not have any reason to arrest him. He was a known subject. He was the subject of other police reports."</p> <p>Lee also said security at Boise Towne Square had contacted Bergquist multiple times in the past.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Civil unrest: assaults on police rise
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-10-26/assaults-on-police-up-in-2020-amid-civil-unrest
GIST	<p>During a year of global civil unrest, assaults on law enforcement officers increased nationwide, and Los Angeles reported the most attacks on police officers in the line of duty in the past decade, according to federal and state data.</p> <p>FBI numbers released this month show there were 60,105 U.S. officers assaulted in 2020, with about 31% reporting some kind of injuries — a 7.2% increase from 2019. And more than half that increase came from confrontations with protesters.</p> <p>In Los Angeles, state justice department records show LAPD officers were assaulted 1,172 times, up from 864 attacks the year before. Of those 2020 incidents, nearly 58% were inflicted by a person, about 31% with a dangerous object and nearly 9% with a firearm, state justice records show. Only a handful of LAPD officers had documented injuries, state data show.</p> <p>Those increases were mirrored across Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside and Ventura counties as well, with assaults on police officers climbing significantly in 2020, according to the California Department of Justice records.</p> <p>But the numbers are an anomaly, LAPD Chief Michel Moore said, citing the widespread discord following the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in May. Street protests surged across the country and sometimes took violent turns, including in Los Angeles.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Moore said during a police commission meeting there have been 642 assaults on officers so far this year, a 19% decrease from the 793 attacks on officers reported at this point last year.</p> <p>A better comparison, Moore said, would be to look at the same span during 2019, when there were 597 assaults on officers reported. This year's total is a nearly 8% increase from 2019, which Moore said is also significant.</p> <p>The chief noted that one LAPD officer was attacked Friday night in the Harbor area when a man accused of driving a stolen car intentionally rammed into a patrol vehicle. The officer's left leg was pinned, and he suffered a laceration and bruising, Moore said. The driver was later arrested and booked on suspicion of attempted murder of an officer.</p>

Regardless of the reasons for 2020's violence against law enforcement officers, it is being repeated in 2021 on a national scale, with deadly results. The number of officers killed by violence in the line of duty has reached its highest rate in five years, FBI data show.

"What we're seeing this year is an alarming uptick in violence against law enforcement, and it's something that deserves way more attention than it's getting," FBI Director Christopher Wray said during National Police Week earlier this month. "We are looking at now 59 officers or agents murdered in the line of duty this year. That's an over 50% increase from [the same time] last year."

From Jan. 1 through Oct. 12, 59 officers died as a result of felonious acts, up from 39 during the same span last year, according to FBI data. Accidental deaths, such as those caused by car crashes, were at 46 so far this year, up from 37 in 2020.

In California, six officers have been shot dead in 2021, and two more have died in vehicular assaults.

The increased police killings coincide with an overall spike in the number of homicides nationwide. Last year saw the largest single-year increase ever recorded in homicides since the FBI began collecting numbers in the 1960s, with a nearly 30% increase. And that trend is continuing this year, federal data show.

Comparatively speaking, though, the increase in assault injuries to police officers saw only a slight increase in 2020, with the rate ticking up from 3.6 assaults per 100 officers in 2019 to 3.7 last year. Still, those rates are a shadow of the high-crime 1990s, when police documented more than 13 assaults per 100 officers nationwide.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 US seeks extradition WikiLeaks Assange
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/europe-united-states-london-espionage-extradition-c63b3ff63d31a16d6aa8fd6ea74dc0ff
GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — The United States asked Britain's High Court on Wednesday to overturn a judge's decision that Julian Assange should not be sent to the United States to face espionage charges, promising that the WikiLeaks founder would be able to serve any prison sentence he receives in his native Australia.</p> <p>In January, a lower court judge refused an American request to extradite Assange on spying charges over WikiLeaks' publication of secret military documents a decade ago.</p> <p>District Judge Vanessa Baraitser denied extradition on health grounds, saying Assange was likely to kill himself if held under harsh U.S. prison conditions. But Baraitser rejected defense arguments that Assange faces a politically motivated American prosecution that would override free-speech protections, and she said the U.S. judicial system would give him a fair trial.</p> <p>An attorney for the U.S. government, James Lewis, argued Wednesday that the judge erred when she ruled Assange would be at risk of suicide if he were sent to the United States. He said American authorities had promised that Assange would not be held before trial in a top-security "Supermax" prison or subjected to strict isolation conditions, and would be allowed in the event of a conviction to serve any sentence in Australia.</p> <p>Lewis said the assurances "are binding on the United States."</p> <p>U.S. authorities also argue that Assange does not meet the threshold of being so ill that he cannot resist harming himself.</p> <p>"Once there is an assurance of appropriate medical care, once it is clear he will be repatriated to Australia to serve any sentence, then we can safely say the district judge would not have decided the relevant question in the way that she did," Lewis said.</p>

Several dozen pro-Assange protesters rallied outside London's Royal Courts of Justice before the hearing, which is scheduled to last two days.

Assange, who is being held at London's high-security Belmarsh Prison, had been expected to attend by video link, but his lawyer, Edward Fitzgerald, said Assange had been put on a high dose of medication and "doesn't feel able to attend the proceedings."

A video link later showed Assange appearing to listen to the hearing. During previous court sessions, his lawyers said he experienced physical and mental health problems.

Assange's partner, Stella Moris, said outside court that she was "very concerned for Julian's health. I saw him on Saturday. He's very thin."

"It is completely unthinkable that the U.K. courts could agree to this," Moris said. "I hope the courts will end this nightmare, that Julian is able to come home soon and that wise heads prevail."

The two justices hearing the appeal — who include England's most senior judge, Lord Chief Justice Ian Burnett — are not expected to give their ruling for several weeks. That will likely not end the epic legal saga, however, since the losing side can seek to appeal to the U.K. Supreme Court.

U.S. prosecutors have indicted Assange on 17 espionage charges and one charge of computer misuse over WikiLeaks' publication of thousands of leaked military and diplomatic documents. The charges carry a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison.

The prosecutors say Assange unlawfully helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal classified diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks later published. Lawyers for Assange argue that he was acting as a journalist and is entitled to First Amendment freedom of speech protections for publishing documents that exposed U.S. military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Assange, 50, has been in prison since he was arrested in April 2019 for skipping bail during a separate legal battle. Before that he spent seven years holed up inside Ecuador's London embassy, where he fled in 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden to face allegations of rape and sexual assault.

Sweden dropped the sex crimes investigations in November 2019 because so much time had elapsed, but Assange remains in prison. The judge who blocked extradition in January ordered that he must stay in custody during any U.S. appeal, ruling that the Australian citizen "has an incentive to abscond" if he is freed.

WikiLeaks supporters say testimony from witnesses during the extradition hearing that Assange was spied on while in the embassy by a Spanish security firm at the behest of the CIA — and that there was even talk of abducting or killing him — undermines U.S. claims he will be treated fairly.

Journalism organizations and human rights groups have urged President Joe Biden to drop the prosecution launched under his predecessor, Donald Trump.

Amnesty International Secretary-General Agnes Callamard said the charges were politically motivated and should be dropped.

"It is a damning indictment that nearly 20 years on, virtually no one responsible for alleged U.S. war crimes committed in the course of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars has been held accountable, let alone prosecuted, and yet a publisher who exposed such crimes is potentially facing a lifetime in jail," she said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Police: surveillance mistake Laundrie case
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/26/us/brian-laundrie-police-errors

(CNN) Investigators in Florida confused Brian Laundrie's mother with her son while they were monitoring the family's home in the days after Laundrie's fiancée, [Gabby Petito](#), was reported missing, a police spokesperson said.

"They are built kind of similarly," North Port Police Department spokesperson Josh Taylor [told CNN affiliate WINK](#) on Monday in an exclusive interview. "No case is perfect"

The revelation of the surveillance mistake clarifies at least one [discrepancy -- but perhaps raises a new contradiction --](#) between the versions of events laid out by authorities and by the Laundrie family attorney of what happened during a critical few days in September after Petito went missing while road-tripping with Laundrie but before [her body was found](#) in a Wyoming national forest. A coroner ruled Petito [died by strangulation](#).

Laundrie's [remains were found last week](#) at a nature reserve near his family home, and his parents could be key to understanding what happened to Petito and later to him.

After Laundrie returned to Florida without Petito, police saw him drive away from his family home September 13 in his Ford Mustang, Taylor told WINK. Then, two days later, the Mustang returned.

"We thought that we had seen Brian come back into the home," Taylor said.

Police now believe the car had actually been driven back to the home by Laundrie's mother, Roberta Laundrie, Taylor said.

But for the next two days, police believed Brian Laundrie was at home.

Investigators realized the mistake September 17, when his parents told police they hadn't seen their son since September 14, a Tuesday. They later changed their recollection, their attorney has said, to say they hadn't seen him since September 13, after he said he was going to [the Carlton Reserve](#), the nearby 25,000-acre nature park.

Laundrie family lawyer notes another police gap

As to the Mustang's driver on September 15, "I believe it was his mom, who was wearing a baseball cap," Taylor said. "They had returned from the park with that Mustang.

"So, who does that, right?" the police spokesperson continued. "Like, if you think your son's missing since Tuesday, you're going to bring his car back to the home -- so, it didn't make sense that anyone would do that if he wasn't there. So, the individual getting out with a baseball cap, we thought was Brian."

Police, however, had placed a citation by September 14 on the Mustang while it was parked at the nature reserve, the Laundrie family attorney, Steve Bertolino, pointed out Tuesday.

"Everyone makes mistakes. But Brian and Roberta are not 'built' the same. Moreover, it was (North Port police) that put the ticket on the Mustang at the park and if they saw Brian leave on Monday in the Mustang, which is news to me, then they should have been watching the Mustang and the park starting on Monday and they would have known it was Chris and Roberta that retrieved the Mustang from the park.

"Now to be clear, none this may have made a difference with respect to Brian's life but it certainly would have prevented all of the false accusations leveled by so many against Chris and Roberta with respect to 'hiding' Brian or otherwise financing an 'escape,'" Bertolino added.

North Port Police Chief Todd Garrison was asked September 16 during a news conference if he knew where Laundrie was "right now."

"Yes," Garrison responded.

	<p>The Laundries later told police they had gone to the nature preserve on September 15 to retrieve the family vehicle.</p> <p>"Let the record be clear, the Laundries reported Brian did not come home the night he went out for the hike," Bertolino told CNN last week. "I actually reported that to the FBI, personally."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Rittenhouse trial: 'rioters' not 'victims'
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/27/us/kyle-rittenhouse-trial-victim-terminology/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A courtroom debate Monday over the use of terms like "victim" and "arsonist" ahead of the trial Kyle Rittenhouse could foreshadow contentious proceedings when the hearing gets underway for the teen accused in a deadly shooting during protests in Kenosha, Wisconsin.</p> <p>Rittenhouse is charged with felony homicide related to the shooting and killing of Anthony M. Huber and Joseph Rosenbaum and felony attempted homicide for allegedly wounding Gaige Grosskreutz during protests that followed the police shooting of Jacob Blake in August 2020.</p> <p>Rittenhouse, who was 17 at the time, is also charged with possession of a dangerous weapon while under the age of 18, a misdemeanor, according to court records.</p> <p>He has pleaded not guilty and his attorneys argue he acted in self-defense.</p> <p>On Monday, Rittenhouse's legal team and prosecutors attended a pretrial hearing to review outstanding issues before jury selection begins on November 1.</p> <p>The conversation turned to whether defense attorneys would be allowed to refer to Huber, Rosenbaum and Grosskreutz as arsonists, rioters or looters due to their alleged behavior during the chaotic and fiery demonstrations.</p> <p>"I don't think I'm inclined toward prior restraint," said Kenosha County Circuit Judge Bruce Schroeder.</p> <p>"Let the evidence show what the evidence shows. And if the evidence shows that any or more than one of these people were engaged in arson, rioting or looting, then I'm not going to tell the defense they can't call them that," he added.</p> <p>But Assistant District Attorney Thomas Binger argued the judge was setting up a "double standard" due to his long-standing rule of not allowing prosecutors to refer to individuals as "victims" during a trial.</p> <p>"If I were to count the number of times that you've admonished me not to call someone a victim during a trial, it would be in the thousands," Binger said.</p> <p>"The word victim is a loaded, loaded word. And I think alleged victim is a cousin to it," Schroeder said.</p> <p>But Binger disagreed, telling the judge, "I think it's the exact same issue. The terms that I'm identifying here, such as rioters, looters, arsonists, are as loaded, if not more loaded, than the term victim."</p> <p>The debate over labels and how they may inform the jury's impression of those at the center or the trial gets to the heart of the defense's argument that Rittenhouse opened fire that night to protect himself.</p> <p>Numerous videos taken during the protests show Rittenhouse, wearing a green T-shirt and a backward baseball cap and carrying an AR-15-style rifle, walking the city's streets with a group of armed men.</p> <p>According to the criminal complaint against Rittenhouse, which is based on videos and witness accounts, the situation turned deadly after the teenager scuffled with protesters near a car dealership. He allegedly shot Rosenbaum, a 36-year-old unarmed protester, after Rosenbaum threw an object that appeared to be a plastic bag at him and missed.</p>

As Rosenbaum lay on the ground, the complaint says, Rittenhouse ran away while calling a friend and telling them, "I just killed somebody." He was pursued by protesters, and then tripped and fell to the ground.

While he was on the ground, Rittenhouse shot Huber, who appeared to hit him with a skateboard, according to the complaint, and then shot a third protester approaching him, Grosskreutz, in the right arm. Grosskreutz was holding a handgun but had his hands up, the complaint says.

After the shooting, Rittenhouse walked by police with his hands up, bystander videos show, and he turned himself in at his local police department the morning after the shooting.

Binger, the prosecutor, argued Monday that any behavior Rosenbaum, Huber or Grosskreutz may have participated in that night that could lead the jury to believe they were arsonists, rioters or looters wasn't witnessed by Rittenhouse and shouldn't be part of his defense.

"He can't argue self-defense against things he's not aware of," Binger said. "These other acts are strictly designed to attack the reputation of these individuals, it's designed to paint them in the worst possible light to prejudice them. Two of them can't defend themselves ... because the defendant killed them. And it's unduly prejudicial to the jury to be told about any of those things."

But a defense attorney said the shootings should be weighed against the wider context of what was happening that night.

"All of that lawlessness, all of the facts and circumstances surrounding what is going on, is relevant in terms of Kyle Rittenhouse's conduct. I think it's impossible to say that it's not."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Brinks getaway driver granted clemency
SOURCE	https://dailyvoice.com/new-york/ramapo/news/brinks-getaway-driver-granted-clemency-by-cuomo-now-gets-parole/818881/
GIST	<p>David Gilbert, the getaway driver in the fatal 1981 Brinks robbery in Rockland County that claimed the lives of three, has been granted parole after spending decades in prison.</p> <p>The move comes after Gilbert was granted clemency by former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo in one of his last official acts in office, paving the way for parole.</p> <p>The New York State Corrections Department announced on Tuesday, Oct. 26 that Gilbert, now 76, a former left-wing extremist, has been paroled following his incarceration for the botched armored car robbery that left a guard and two police officers dead in the Hudson Valley.</p> <p>Gilbert and other former members of the Weather Underground, a militant group that grew out of the anti-Vietnam War movement decades ago, had joined with members of the Black Liberation Army in the botched Oct. 20, 1981 robbery.</p> <p>They stole \$1.6 million in cash from an armored car outside the Nanuet Mall near the Rockland County community of Nyack, though the three were killed in a holdup and subsequent shootout with the robbers.</p> <p>Gilbert had been sentenced to a term of 75 years to life for his role in the robbery.</p> <p>With his parole granted, Gilbert will now be able to leave the Shawangunk Correctional Facility in Ulster County as soon as next month.</p> <p>Gilbert's release is scheduled for no later than Tuesday, Nov. 30, according to Thomas Mailey, a spokesperson for the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.</p>

The decision by the parole board was met with swift and decisive backlash by both supporters and detractors.

"Today's ruling by the New York State Parole Board is a cruel and unjust slap in the face to the families of Sergeant Edward O'Grady, Officer Waverly 'Chipper' Brown and Brinks guard Peter Paige as well as the people of Rockland County, especially given the fact that only days ago Rockland held our annual ceremony commemorating the lives of those that David Gilbert was convicted of killing 40 years ago," County Executive Ed Day said in a statement.

"Former Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the Parole Board should be ashamed for allowing this domestic terrorist to walk free on our streets," he continued. "There's no reason that David Gilbert should not have to face the full consequences of his heinous crimes, no matter how much time has passed."

New York Assemblyman Mike Lawler also used the opportunity to take a shot at Cuomo, calling the entire situation an "absolute abomination."

"(Andrew Cuomo) should be ashamed of himself and the entire parole board should resign in disgrace," he stated. "(New Yorkers) of good conscience must vote out 'woke' politicians and stop this insanity."

Republican gubernatorial hopeful and former Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino took to social media to express his displeasure with Gilbert's release following Lawler's comments.

"It used to be a capital offense to murder a police officer," he posted. "Now in NY under the radical Cuomo-Hochul parole board...kill a cop, just be patient. Eventually, you'll be freed. Over 20 released from prison in just the last (two years). Abomination is right, assemblyman. They must be replaced."

Gilbert's son, San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin, who has been lobbying to have his father released like others involved in the case, took the opposite viewpoint.

"I am so grateful to the parole board and to everyone who has supported my father during his more than 40 years in prison," he said in a statement.

"I'm thinking about the other children affected by this crime and want to make sure that nothing I do or say further upsets the victims' families. Their loved ones will never be forgotten."

Jose Saldana, the Director of the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign also supported the board's decision to grant Gilbert's release.

"We support the Parole Board's decisions to release incarcerated people who have served decades in prison and pose no risk to public safety," he said. "The purpose of parole is to evaluate people for release based on who they are today, not to extend sentences into perpetuity.

"Mr. Gilbert spent decades in prison creating rehabilitative programs and has been an unparalleled positive influence on the lives of countless incarcerated people," Saldana added. "There is no doubt that he will be an asset to his community. This and other recent decisions the Parole Board has made based on those principles are the right ones."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Armed juveniles abduct teen in Auburn
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/south-sound-news/teen-abducted-gunpoint-by-juveniles-auburn/OV77EEZIKNAGXPN4OXVYR6TWWQ/
GIST	Auburn police responded to a call of an abduction of a 15-year-old boy by a group of juveniles, who later assaulted him, stripped him of his clothes and took his cellphone.

	<p>The abduction occurred in the 1200 block of Southeast 312th Street around 2 p.m. Monday.</p> <p>The boy was able to escape and was chased for a short time before the juveniles returned to their car and left the scene.</p> <p>“He was bleeding from his ear and his mouth,” says Amanda Smart who found the young boy wandering in her neighborhood.</p> <p>“I just instantly opened my door and told him to get inside,” she says.</p> <p>Smart says the boy told her the suspects drove around, eventually making their way to her neighborhood where he was able to break free. She says the boy told her, “As they were beating him he could hear one of them say move so I can shoot him.”</p> <p>After officers found their car, the juveniles fled.</p> <p>A K-9 unit began a track, locating and arresting two females.</p> <p>Three suspects have not been located and investigators are working to confirm their identities.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Illinois police officer shot, killed
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/illinois-police-officer-shot-and-wounded-near-st-louis/
GIST	<p>PONTOON BEACH, Ill. (AP) — A police officer was shot to death Tuesday by a man at a gas station in an Illinois suburb of St. Louis, authorities said.</p> <p>Pontoon Beach Officer Tyler Timmins, 36, died after being taken to a hospital, Illinois State Police Trooper Jayme Bufford said.</p> <p>The officer was shot at around 8 a.m. at a Speedway gas station along Route 111 and was rushed to a hospital in nearby Granite City before being transferred a St. Louis hospital that specializes in the most critical cases, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.</p> <p>Bufford said Timmins had approached a car in the gas station’s parking lot because he suspected it had been stolen, and that a man began firing on him. The suspect was taken into custody.</p> <p>The vehicle that apparently sparked the officer’s interest was a stolen Toyota Tacoma pickup truck with Missouri license plates.</p> <p>Illinois State Police are investigating the shooting.</p> <p>Bufford did not immediately release additional information, saying that “the investigation is in its infancy.”</p> <p>Timmins joined the Pontoon Beach police force in April 2020, State Police Master Sgt. Elbert Jennings said. He was a police officer in Madison County for 14 years and previously served as a police officer in Roxana, Wordon and Hartford.</p> <p>Edwardsville Police Chief Michael Fillback said officers throughout the area are filling in on patrol for Pontoon Beach because that city’s officers were so shaken by the shooting.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Seattle man pleads guilty Jan 6 assault
SOURCE	https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/seattle-man-pleads-guilty-assault-law-enforcement-during-jan-6-capitol-breach

GIST	<p>WASHINGTON – A Seattle, Washington man pleaded guilty today to assaulting law enforcement during the breach of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, which disrupted a joint session of the U.S. Congress that was in the process of ascertaining and counting the electoral votes related to the presidential election.</p> <p>According to court documents, Mark Leffingwell, 52, made his way just inside the Senate Wing entrance of the U.S. Capitol building at approximately 4 p.m. on Jan. 6. He stood at the front of a crowd of people who had been rebuffed by a line of U.S. Capitol Police and Metropolitan Police Department officers who were preventing rioters from entering the building. After minutes of chanting, the crowd moved closer to the line of officers. Two Capitol Police officers attempted to keep the crowd, including Leffingwell, at bay by pushing them back. Leffingwell punched both officers, hitting one twice. He was eventually detained and arrested on Jan. 6.</p> <p>Leffingwell is to be sentenced on Feb. 10, 2022. He faces up to eight years in prison and a \$250,000 fine for assaulting, resisting, or impeding officers. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.</p> <p>The case is being prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia and the Department of Justice National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section. The case was investigated by the U.S. Capitol Police.</p> <p>In the nine months since Jan. 6, more than 650 individuals have been arrested in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including over 190 individuals charged with assaulting or impeding law enforcement. The investigation remains ongoing.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Dangerous laser strikes continue to rise
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/airport-aviation-security/dangerous-laser-strikes-continue-to-rise-in-2021/
GIST	<p>Shining a laser at an aircraft is a serious safety threat that continues to rise. As of Oct. 14, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has received 7,186 laser strike reports for 2021, exceeding the 2020 total of 6,852. This marks the highest number of reports since 2016.</p> <p>Many types of high-powered lasers can completely incapacitate pilots, many of whom are flying airplanes with hundreds of passengers. People who shine lasers at aircraft face FAA fines of up to \$11,000 per violation and up to \$30,800 for multiple laser incidents. The FAA has issued \$120,000 in fines for laser strikes during 2021. Violators can also face criminal penalties from federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.</p> <p>To identify laser strike trends, the FAA developed a visualization tool, using the Tableau software platform that shows laser strike data from 2010 to 2020 and highlights trends by geographic area, per capita data, time of day and year. The FAA shares the information to draw attention to the dangerously high rate of laser strikes on airplanes. Laser report data by year can be downloaded on the FAA’s website.</p> <p>Members of the public who witness laser strike incidents are encouraged to report them to the FAA and local law enforcement agencies.</p>
Return to Top	Read more at the FAA

HEADLINE	10/26 Arrest: Islamic Center of Tacoma arson
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article255312151.html
GIST	A suspect wanted in connection with the Oct. 11 arson at the Islamic Center of Tacoma that rendered the building unusable was arrested Tuesday by the Pierce County Sheriff’s Department.

	<p>The suspect, a University Place resident, was identified through tips from the public and the department's arson investigator, said Sheriff's Department spokesman Sgt. Darren Moss. Detectives searched the residence of the 38-year-old suspect Tuesday, Moss said.</p> <p>Witnesses who saw the suspect at the mosque on Oct. 11 said he was the same person seen earlier that evening at a drug store at Bridgeport Way West and 27th Street West in University Place.</p> <p>They identified him through a Crime Stoppers bulletin.</p> <p>The suspect was booked into the Pierce County Jail for investigation of first-degree arson.</p> <p>Police and fire crews responded to the fire at the Islamic Center shortly after 8 p.m. Two people were inside the building when the fire began but were able to get out. No one was injured.</p> <p>Since the fire, a fundraiser has raised \$330,000 to help rebuild.</p> <p>Gov. Jay Inslee visited the mosque to meet with community leaders and denounce the fire. "The Muslim community's resilience and faith continues to shine, and we stand in solidarity, as an attack on one is an attack on all," Inslee said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Women rising to power in Sinaloa Cartel
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/v7e95y/sinaloa-cartel-valencia-luz-fajardo-rise-to-power
GIST	<p>CULIACAN, Mexico — Emma Coronel first learned to fire a gun when her husband, Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, was extradited from Mexico to face drug trafficking charges that would eventually put him away for life. With El Chapo taken out of Mexico's criminal landscape for good, Coronel felt like she needed to learn how to protect herself.</p> <p>“No one here gave a shit that she was Chapo's wife once he was extradited,” a source close to the Sinaloa Cartel told VICE World News.</p> <p>Coronel, who feared for the life of her two young daughters as well as her own, has since turned herself in and pleaded guilty to drug trafficking charges in the United States. But although she is the Sinaloa Cartel's most visible woman, she was far from the most powerful or resourceful to pepper its ranks.</p> <p>That achievement goes to a woman whose name—Guadalupe Fernández Valencia—is virtually unknown. Another woman, Luz Irene Fajardo Campos, ran an independent trafficking ring out of the Sinaloa Cartel's heartland.</p> <p>Though the most visible women in the drug trade tend to fit into Coronel's mold, across the state of Sinaloa, where the culture of the drug trade world is strongest in Mexico, women's experiences vary enormously, as does their level of participation and agency.</p> <p>A growing number of women are getting trained to defend themselves—like Coronel—from the insidious misogyny and violence that characterizes Mexico's <i>narco-cultura</i>. Other women are even signing up to become killers for the cartels themselves, and boot camps run by criminal groups to train killers are increasingly being attended by women.</p> <p>Organized crime in Mexico has led to myriad lived experiences for these women: Some have been empowered by organized crime; others have been victimized, cowed, and terrified. Many women have experienced all of those things, but few have escaped the impact and repercussions of the drug trade. Their stories—laid out here, many for the first time—reveal a complicated criminal landscape.</p> <p>Mouth wide shut</p> <p>Standing alone at the front of a Chicago courtroom, Fernández Valencia looked like a vulnerable, scared grandmother. She wore orange prison overalls, and spoke Spanish through a white face mask and an</p>

interpreter. She was 61 years old, and by that day in court this past August, she'd been in custody since 2016.

"I want to take advantage of this opportunity to ask forgiveness from my children and from my family," she told the judge, before she was handed a 10-year prison sentence. More than two years prior, she had pleaded guilty, tearfully, to a sobering litany of [drug trafficking](#) charges, including a massive drug distribution conspiracy and money laundering. Fernández Valencia spent a total of more than three decades in the drug business, a chunk of it working for El Chapo's Sinaloa Cartel. Virtually unknown, she is the highest-ranking female Sinaloa Cartel operative known to date.

Fernández Valencia's was the only woman's name on the charge sheet that helped send El Chapo to prison, and prosecutors claim she worked closely with Jesús Alfredo Guzmán Salazar, known as Jesús or "Alfredillo," one of the kingpin's sons.

Alfredillo remains at large in Culiacán, and enquiries about Fernández Valencia by VICE World News bore little fruit by way of people who knew her and might be willing to talk about her: The risks were simply too high with her boss still at large—El Chapo's sons have a reputation as irreverent, violent, and entitled millennials. Court documents describe Fernández Valencia as Jesús' "lieutenant." They worked together on the entire drug distribution process, from start to finish, until she was arrested in Culiacán a month after El Chapo's final capture in January 2016.

Mobile phone footage that made the rounds showed Fernández Valencia [being led down a quiet street](#) by two female officers. She wore black pants and a leopard-print shirt, and no force was used by the officers flanking her as she climbed submissively into a police truck, her long hair pulled to the side in a plait that hung over her shoulder. The footage seemed to have been taken by a police officer. There was no media present at her arrest. No perp walk.

By pleading guilty to the charges against her, Fernández Valencia avoided trial, and much of her story remains in the shadows. But public records betray some of her criminal career, spanning three decades.

Originally from the southern, humid state of Michoacán, Fernández Valencia holds childhood memories of lush green mountains and avocado and lime fields, no doubt sullied by the drama going on around her back then. When she was a teenager, the crime lords moved in. They plundered the heroin poppy and marijuana plantations, holding humble farmers to ransom. Eventually, the drug gangs would take over entire villages like hers, raping or marrying many of the younger girls. They would grow to dominate not just the lucrative production of heroin and crystal meth but also the mineral and gold mines dotted around the state, as well as the avocado and lime industries.

Fernández Valencia escaped for a time, to the U.S., undocumented, like millions of her countrymen and women before her. That's when she got her first taste of the drug business, dealing bags of dope on the streets of California. She was convicted in the late 1990s and deported back to Mexico after doing her time.

She set up home in Culiacán in 2009 and started working with her brother, Manuel, exploiting her existing drug contacts in California to send some 30 kilos of cocaine a week to Los Angeles, according to court documents. But when Manuel got arrested in 2010, she moved her family to Guadalajara and tried to go straight.

It didn't work.

Fernández Valencia was approached there by someone described as "Individual B" in her [plea agreement](#). That could well have been Alfredillo, El Chapo's son, whom Manuel had been working with. Whoever "he" was, he told her that her family wasn't safe and "invited" her to return to Culiacán under his protection and work for him selling his drugs.

Fernández Valencia agreed, and it isn't clear from the court documents whether the "invitation" to join was optional.

By 2016, she couldn't hide any longer. Following her arrest and extradition, Fernández decided to plead guilty, skip a public trial, and cooperate with U.S. law enforcement. By the time she got to the U.S., in November 2017, El Chapo's trial was already well underway. She could have also worked with U.S. law enforcement during her time in the Mexican prison awaiting extradition, sharing what she knew. Fernández Valencia was ultimately given a 10-year sentence—she'd already done seven by the time it got handed down—reflecting her "substantial" cooperation, as prosecutors called it.

And there's every chance that decision may come back to haunt her later when she walks free. If she doesn't enter witness protection, she could be deported back to Mexico, which would be a death sentence for her.

Cooperation vs. trial

If the risks of blabbing in prison have always been high, keeping one's mouth shut also comes with a price.

Unlike Fernández Valencia, Luz Irene Fajardo Campos ran her own drug trafficking cell that was associated with but not part of the Sinaloa Cartel, between 2010 and 2016, according to prosecutors. A trained lawyer, she was a middle-class girl from an agricultural family near Cosala in rural Sinaloa, but she got into the drug business with her two sons. Her text messages with trafficking associates were peppered with photos of her with her young grandchildren and friends, posing and smiling, doing the peace sign.

Fajardo Campos was arrested in Bogota, Colombia, in April 2017 during a business trip and eventually extradited to the U.S. Shortly after that, her two young-adult sons, whose names remain unknown, were picked up in the city of Hermosillo, in the state of Sonora next door to Sinaloa, VICE World News learned from two sources close to Fajardo Campos's family and case. They reappeared in their burned-out truck, their bodies dismembered and charred. It's unclear whether they were killed by a rival trafficking organization over their continuing illegal enterprise or their murder was a message from the powers that be in Sinaloa for their mother to keep her mouth shut. That was the consequence, intended or not, and she refused to plead guilty and went to trial.

During the proceedings, prosecutors highlighted the keys of cocaine she trafficked—branded with the words JENCA—and the small planes she bought and commandeered through Honduras loaded with cocaine. One photo showed a light airplane that had crashed, allegedly into the Honduran jungle, killing the pilot and losing half a ton of dope.

Fajardo's mental state deteriorated behind bars, according to court documents that show she was sent for psychiatric evaluation. It's likely that the slaughter of her sons weighed heavily on her. She was convicted and slapped with a 22-year sentence in July 2021, substantially more than Fernández Valencia.

Her lawyer, Robert Feitel, told VICE World News that hers was a "Greek tragedy."

"Who is going to see two of their kids kidnapped and murdered and then do anything to put the rest of their family at risk? Nobody is going to do that," said Feitel. Fajardo Campos' parents and at least one sister still live in Sinaloa, as do many of her extended family.

It will now likely be the better part of two decades before she sees any of them again. But having stayed schtum, it will be safer for her to return home to Culiacán one day. Fernández Valencia wouldn't dare.

Self-defense

Her long, white nail tips made it a little awkward to load the magazine of the Glock 25. She pressed the small, .380-caliber bullets into the spring mechanism, then slid it into the chamber of the gun handle.

She raised her arms, her pale skin and perfectly straightened, jet-black hair protected from the scorching midday sun by a white, wide-brimmed hat. Clutching the Glock with both hands, her right forefinger rested on the side.

“When you’re ready,” said the man standing next to her.

She took aim at the head-and-shoulders silhouette 10 feet in front of her, and then fired. It was the first shot of her life; the bullet found its target in the throat area of the cardboard target.

“It felt good,” said Tessa. “At first I was nervous about what it would feel like in my body, but then it felt good to shoot, and it got easier and easier.”

Tessa, 45, is a lifelong resident of Culiacán. Fed up with both the generalized and gender-focused violence imposed, in part, by the city’s criminal bosses and the narco-culture they’ve spawned, she and other women in the area have decided to take matters, and weapons, into their own hands.

Tessa and two other women were on a legal shooting range under the supervision of Abel Jacobo Miller, a licensed weapons owner and instructor, on a sun-bleached Sunday morning in May. Legal gun ownership in Mexico is both rare and expensive, and his courses are popular. Fajardo Campos chose to defend herself rather than plead guilty and put her family at risk.

Jacobo Miller is hell-bent on trying to convince many ordinary women in Culiacán to learn self-defense.

“Sixty percent of those who come are women,” said Jacobo Miller. Female participation, he added, continues to increase.

“A 60-kilo woman will struggle to confront a 90-kilo man with her fists. But with this,” he said, brandishing a Glock, “with a gun, we’re equals.”

Tessa, who is an accountant and mother of three, decided to take the course after she was robbed twice at gunpoint.

“I wanted to have the confidence to do it,” she said.

“With things the way they are, with so much violence, there’s no room for terror. Now, it’s about security and keeping us safe,” she told me.

Jacobo Miller, also known by his friends and followers as “Master,” is on a mission to prove that if women can change their mental attitude, they’re capable of defending themselves with anything, from a car key to a pen.

The misogynist narco-culture permeates every level of cartel life in Sinaloa, the Mexican state most synonymous with the drug trade. The abduction and brutal murder of women there is common, and some 10 women are killed across Mexico every day because of their gender, according to women’s groups.

Beatriz Estrada, who works with female victims of violence for the government of Sinaloa, said that when she asks women why they don’t leave their violent partners (some of whom are in the drug business), most reply they don’t know what they would do to look after themselves and their children.

“They’re taught to be submissive,” she said, adding that she spends a lot of her time trying to convince women that they can learn to support themselves and their kids.

Across town from the shooting range the day before, more women gathered in a gym on the outskirts of the city to learn basic self-defense techniques. Many of those there had suffered heinous levels of gendered violence.

Maria Lopez, who asked VICE World News not to use her real name because she didn't want her family to learn what had happened to her, said she was kidnapped in a restaurant in broad daylight by a group of young cartel henchmen. She was held captive for four days, along with some friends of hers. During that time, she said she was raped repeatedly. "And not just by one of them. By all of them." After the first few days in captivity, she said, she started asking the men what they wanted sexually, and how, so that they'd stop beating her when they raped her.

"You have to go with the flow to survive," she said.

Kathleen, a slight, blonde woman with blue eyes and arms dotted with tattoos, said she was attacked by her boyfriend six months earlier when she was at his house with him and his parents.

"He stormed into the bathroom and got me into a stranglehold. I was so shocked I could only put my hand on his hand—I was suffocating," she said. He let her go and she fell to the floor, where he proceeded to start kicking her in the ribs until his parents rushed in to intervene. Her own family subsequently blamed her for the attack, she said, accusing her of asking for trouble by being at her boyfriend's house at that time of night.

Jacobo Miller showed the women how to get out of a stranglehold, and shouted, "You can't think that you're not going to stab your husband! He's strangling you! He's trying to kill you!" He and his wife, Ana, who have three daughters, are determined to change the mindset of the women of Culiacán.

Ana will never forget the afternoon now widely known as Black Thursday, when she was stuck in traffic with her three daughters. "Suddenly I saw people getting out of their cars, grabbing their children, and running away," she recalled. Then a young man standing on the edge of the road, wearing a black mask, started firing a Barrett rifle into the air.

"I was hysterical with fear," she remembered.

That day—October 17, 2019—a war broke out between the government and cartel henchmen in the heart of Culiacán after army officers attempted to arrest one of El Chapo's sons, Ovidio. [The episode](#), which resulted in the government having to release Guzmán when it was outnumbered and outgunned by cartel henchmen, was a clear indication of who governs the city, and a humiliation for the administration of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

The cultural and criminal context of Culiacán means that the mentality and ability to push back against violence, or use it, could be considered a survival skill. A woman who asked to be called Luma, age 47, said she was raped by a group of men, and when she eventually got the courage to tell her husband, he told her he was ashamed of her.

"We've been raised as princesses," she said. "But we need to learn how to be warriors."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 'El Chapo' of Guatemala is a woman
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/bvz9wd/el-chapo-of-guatemala-marixa-lemus-perez
GIST	CIUDAD PEDRO DE ALVARADO, Guatemala — With local elections just months away, Mayra Lemus sat down for lunch at the Los Cuernos hotel in Ciudad Pedro de Alvarado, a border town in Guatemala. It was February 18, 2011, and she was running for mayor of the local municipality, which borders El Salvador to the south. She had brought together prominent members of the community as part of her campaigning efforts.

But the attendees had barely finished their entrées when two pickup trucks pulled up filled with heavily armed men, who spilled out of the vehicles brandishing AK-47 rifles and shotguns, according to witnesses. They opened fire before their victims had a chance to move, gunning down eight people—including Mayra and at least one of her bodyguards—where they sat.

Marixa, her younger sister, heard the gunfire from down the road. She jumped into her armored truck and raced toward the fray. Her bodyguards leapt into another truck to follow her, honking the horn, trying to warn her to stop or she would be killed too.

The gunmen at the hotel saw her coming and started spraying bullets at her truck as she got closer; Marixa could feel and hear them pinging off her windscreen. She flung the truck into reverse, changing direction to drive to the local police station for help. But the officers had heard the shooting too and refused to get involved, she said.

By the time Marixa returned to Los Cuernos, alone, the gunfire had stopped and the trucks were gone. The restaurant, a large space under an awning surrounded by a low wall, had been devastated by the shooting. She found her sister's body in a back office a few meters away from where she had been having lunch. Mayra had crawled there to hide, but her aggressors had fired through the door. "Her face was destroyed and she was lying in a pool of her own blood," Marixa remembered in a conversation with VICE World News.

The savage killing has become known locally as "the massacre at Los Cuernos." But unlike the death of the other diners that day in 2011, Mayra's violent end wasn't entirely unexpected.

"She was famous for being a killer. The whole town was scared of her because she was a killer. It's that simple. She decided who lived and who died," a local business owner told me as we spoke in the shade of the Los Cuernos restaurant, where she was killed just a few feet from our table. Legend has it that Mayra, who in photos had shoulder-length red hair and a stocky build, killed her own husband in their house and then dumped his body in another part of town. VICE World News could not independently verify the crime, and she was never charged or convicted. But her violent past, and that of her family, is entangled with those of other power brokers here, for in Jutiapa, southeast Guatemala, there is much to fight over.

Central America's cocaine highway

Central America is Latin America's cocaine highway, and home to crucial land, air, and maritime routes for the drug moving up from the South American nations that produce it—mainly Colombia. That was in plain sight to a trained eye as I arrived in Ciudad Pedro de Alvarado for interviews in March 2021. We drove past dozens of huge container trucks lined up, waiting to cross the border south into El Salvador. Other trucks drove from El Salvador into Guatemala.

The constant movement of legal goods on borders like these throughout the region provides the necessary cover for [drug trafficking](#). Cocaine transported by other protagonists in this series—[Digna Valle](#), [Marllory Chacon](#), and Sebastiana Cottón further south in Central America, and Guadalupe Fernández Valencia and [Luz Fajardo](#) to the north in Mexico—would have passed through this crucial gateway, hidden in compartments or packed between products. There are simply too many trucks to check and search, locals and the anti-narcotics prosecutors in Guatemala City said. The cocaine is brought north and the profits from drug sales—cash—is hidden in the trucks moving south.

The control of trafficking hubs like these is extremely lucrative for the relatively small clans that live in towns along the route and get involved. Alliances between local officials and drug traffickers vary: Sometimes the local authorities tax crime groups to move through the border unchecked, but in other instances the line between the two different groups can blur, or disappear completely. Political and criminal power are often one and the same way, and the geographic location of Ciudad Pedro de Alvarado means criminal organizations from the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico through to smaller transport groups in Honduras and producers in Colombia all have their eyes on, and a hand in, what happens here.

“Basically, being a killer pays. Here, respect is won based on killing people. That determines how much power you have. Just like that. Here it’s not about how educated you are; it’s about how many people you kill,” said the local business owner.

As a result, local politics in Central American border enclaves like Ciudad Pedro de Alvarado and nearby Moyuta is something of a combat sport. By the time Mayra was killed, the Lemus family was one of the only two contenders for the winning prize of mayor. Mayra and Marixa’s brother Magno was local mayor until he died in 2009 of a heart attack, and she was finishing his term when she was murdered.

The day Mayra died was not the first time someone had tried to kill her. In June 2006, gunmen opened fire on a vehicle carrying a group of people from the Lemus family, including Mayra and Magno. Both survived, but their niece—Marixa’s 17-year-old daughter, Jennifer—was killed, as were other members of the family.

The attack took place on a highway near Moyuta, and today the memorial that the Lemus family erected in honor of the victims remains, with crosses that have been embedded in the ground, underneath a curved, concrete arc to protect them from the weather. There is no cross bearing Jennifer’s name—on the ground in front of the three crosses is what looks like what’s left of the base of a fourth that had been ripped out. The Lemus family were campaigning for Magno’s mayoral bid when the 2006 attack happened. He went on to win.

But Marixa took the loss of Jennifer hard. “I can’t tell you how many holes she had in her body that day—I saw her back, I knew she was dead,” she said. The images of the bodies of both Jennifer and Mayra are seared into Marixa’s memory. The author of the highway attack remains opaque, but she blames one man for the massacre at the restaurant that killed Mayra: Roberto Marroquín Fuentes, the Lemus’ political nemesis.

He was Mayra’s political rival in the race for mayor of Moyuta, Jutiapa, in 2011 and one of the main suspects in the investigation into her killing that happened months before the vote, [according to reports](#) based on documents from Guatemala’s prosecutor’s office.

Marroquín, who remains Moyuta’s mayor today, told me he had nothing to do with Mayra’s murder and that he’d cooperated with the subsequent investigation. He said that he has only ever acted to defend himself, and that the Lemus family resented him for his local popularity. Marroquín was never arrested or charged for Mayra’s murder. “One creates their own way in life. This happened for not knowing how to handle [herself] or for being too ambitious,” he [told a local television station](#) following her death.

Marixa stepped in to replace Mayra in the mayoral race when she was killed, and in an attempt to improve her chances of winning, she joined forces with another political (and criminal) rival of Marroquín’s, a man named Rony Rodriguez. With Mayra gone, Rodriguez was the local player most capable of beating Marroquín in the runoff for mayor. And it wasn’t the only mantel Rodriguez had taken on from the Lemus family—[witnesses reportedly said](#) that he had also taken on the control of the town’s local drug trafficking routes following the death of their previous master in 2009: Magno Lemus.

But Rodriguez’s political bid wasn’t to be. Just months after Mayra was gunned down, [so was he, in Moyuta in June 2011](#). Marroquín went on to win the mayoral race, with more than twice as many votes as Marixa, all of which further embittered her against him. So much so that, according to Marroquín, she tried to kill him. Three times.

His car was attacked by gunmen in the local area in November 2013, and less than a month later bombs were planted on a bridge that Marroquín was supposed to cross on his drive home, according to local media reports. But the bomb never went off, and local police who were allegedly in on the murder plot ran off, leaving their AK-47s and [at least one grenade on the scene to be found later by investigators](#). Marroquín emerged unscathed from both attacks.

By the time the third attempt to kill him took place, Marixa was already behind bars—arrested in April 2014 on [kidnapping and murder charges](#) that also included killing her own husband (which she denies). Armed assailants injured Marroquín during that third and final attack in November 2014, and his wife and bodyguard were also harmed when his group—which included a security team—was ambushed. Even with Marixa in prison, Marroquín blamed her.

Today, years later, the battle for Moyuta still isn't over. Marroquín's brother, Jorge Mario Marroquín Fuentes, made history in El Salvador when he was caught in May 2017 with nearly a ton of cocaine, which he was transporting via fishing boat in Acajutla, Sonsonate, a coastal city two hours' drive south across the border from Moyuta. El Salvador's naval chief said at the time that it was the biggest cocaine seizure in the country, bar none.

"Before, it wasn't the narco who would run for mayor; the narcos would finance campaigns and pick the candidate. Now, mayors are running the drug trade directly," said Gerson Alegría, Guatemala's chief anti-drug trafficking prosecutor. He has seen arrests and evidence against locally elected officials mount as organized crime works with, not against, local powers. And when I asked him about the violence between the Lemus and Marroquín clans, and about Marroquín's role directly, he told me: "We have the same info: that it is a battle over territorial control."

But neither Alegría's team nor any other part of the Guatemalan justice machinery has charged Marroquín with any crime, despite what they say. Alegría told me that to a certain extent, Marroquín is protected because he's still in office. For his part, Marroquín said he is a victim of the political establishment, who want rid of him because of his popularity and good deeds. "If I was a narco, I wouldn't be a politician, I'd be in hiding," he told me from behind his desk in Moyuta, dressed in a dark blue shirt and gesticulating wildly.

Marixa hates being behind bars. And she does her best to get out as often as possible: Because of her great escapes, she has earned the moniker of Guatemala's female Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán.

"There are so few people who have even escaped once, and she has done it twice. And the second time was a military prison. How did she do it?" said my Guatemala City taxi driver as he drove me to the prison where Marixa is now being held.

The first time Marixa escaped was in May 2016, after fellow prisoners reportedly helped her vault over a wall. She was caught within hours, but that didn't stop her from trying again. The second time, in May 2017, she broke out of the Mariscal Zavala military prison. Better prepared this time, she snuck out wearing a guard's uniform and got picked up by a waiting car. When the authorities finally caught up with her in El Salvador two weeks later, she had dyed her hair a dark red, like that of her sister Mayra. Her capture was a media sensation: Even the president at the time, Jimmy Morales, [tweeted](#) about it.

Both times that she got out, Marroquín was watching, said a source in Ciudad Pedro de Alvarado. "He shakes in his pants when he sees Marixa. He behaves like the big man when he moves around with his bodyguards, but he is very afraid of her. When she got out for the second time, he didn't leave his house until she was caught—didn't do a single public act."

When I told Marixa during a conversation at the Santa Teresa women's prison this past March, she didn't even try to hide her delight. A slow smile stretched across her lips.

"I know [Marroquín] is terrified of me because I'm a woman who took the reins and I'm going to avenge myself and all of the family that he took away from me," she said.

Marixa, now in her late 40s, wore a white Nike cap over her thick, long black hair that was pulled back into a ponytail. Her skin was pale and clear, with a hint of freckles, her brows thick and dark. She had a black Adidas T-shirt over a white, long-sleeved top, and when she emerged from her solitary cell into the bright atrium of the prison to meet me, she blinked in the light.

During the conversation, she oscillated between tears and steely determination. She wept when she talked about her time in solitary confinement, a consequence of her bids for freedom. “Something inside me is drying up in here,” she said. And tears came as she remembered the state of her daughter Jennifer’s body when she was killed in 2006.

“Roberto [Marroquín] was a nobody. He was a simple fisherman. We were a family with a name. The town knew us and respected us,” she said.

Still, Marixa said that she’d never tried to kill Marroquín, as he claims. “They were *auto-atentados*,” she said, suggesting that he’d staged the attempts on his own life. Another source in Ciudad Pedro Alvarado said the same, and when I repeated that to Alan Ajiatas, Alegría’s deputy at the anti-narcotics prosecutor’s office, he replied: “Well, as a result of the attempts on his life, [Marroquín] did justify buying bulletproof cars, so it’s probable.”

In response, Marroquín laughed at the suggestion that he had faked the attempts on his life.

“When I got out of Mariscal, he said that I was a dangerous woman and that he had to double his security. He came out talking and staining my family’s name when he is himself involved [in these bad things],” said Marixa.

As we talked, she clutched some cardboard folders stuffed with paperwork that she said she was preparing for her lawyer. She told me she was still trying to win her freedom: “I want to reopen my case.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Boise mall shooting probe; suspect dies
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/us/boise-mall-shooting-suspect-dead.html
GIST	<p>The lone suspect in a shooting at a mall in Boise, Idaho, on Monday that killed two people died on Tuesday of injuries he received in an exchange of gunfire with the police, according to the police.</p> <p>The authorities were still investigating the motive for the shooting, in which they say the suspect, Jacob Bergquist, 27, of Boise, fatally shot a mall security guard, Jo Acker, 26, of Caldwell, and Roberto Padilla Arguelles, 49, of Rupert, at Boise Towne Square.</p> <p>At a news conference on Tuesday, Chief Ryan Lee of the Boise Police Department said that Mr. Bergquist had frequented the mall and was known to mall security for calls categorized as disorderly conduct, trespassing and disruptive behavior.</p> <p>Chief Ryan said that investigators were still interviewing people who knew Mr. Bergquist and examining social media to try to understand what had led to the attack.</p> <p>“We’re still very early on in that investigation,” he said, “and there’s not much information that I can share relative to that.”</p> <p>Four people were injured in the shooting, including a 23-year-old woman and a 52-year-old woman who were injured inside the mall, and a 68-year-old woman who was shot in her vehicle outside the mall, according to the Boise police. All three women had non-life-threatening injuries, they said.</p> <p>The fourth person injured by gunfire was a police officer who was treated at a hospital and released on Monday.</p> <p>Officers responded to reports of shots fired at the mall about 1:50 p.m. on Monday, the police said. Callers told dispatchers that an armed man had fired several shots inside the mall, according to the police.</p> <p>A security guard on the first level of the two-story mall initially “contacted” the suspect near a department store on the west side of the mall. The gunman shot and killed the guard.</p>

	<p>The police said Mr. Bergquist then fired several rounds inside the mall, including shots that struck a glass elevator and a second person, who later died at a hospital. The gunman continued firing, injuring four other people, they said.</p> <p>When the police arrived at Boise Towne Square, they saw the gunman running out of the mall. The gunman and the police exchanged gunfire. An officer was shot through the window of his vehicle, the police said.</p> <p>The police said 18 used shell casings were found inside the mall, and that they had executed a search warrant on Tuesday at a home in Boise as part of the investigation.</p> <p>A man who was fleeing the mall after the attack was injured when he fell, the police said, and was treated at a hospital. The chief said it was possible the number of injuries would rise as the investigation continued, given the number of people who “self-evacuated, running for their lives.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Handguns account for most gun murders
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/type-gun-us-homicides-ar-15/story?id=78689504
GIST	<p>Ty Dodson, a 6-year-old boy from Kentucky, had just started kindergarten when he went to visit his grandmother in Tennessee.</p> <p>While at his grandma's home in September 2019, Ty was shot and killed, allegedly by his step-grandfather, with a .357-caliber revolver, according to Nashville police. The man also allegedly shot and killed his wife, Ty's grandmother, before dying by suicide, police said. Ty's 4-year-old sister ran to a neighbor's and survived unharmed, police said.</p> <p>While semi-automatic rifles such as the AR-15 are a major flashpoint in the gun control debate and are often the focus of attention following mass shootings, there are only about 20 million assault rifles in the United States, a fraction of the estimated 400 million guns in the country. Instead, according to ABC News contributor and former FBI agent Brad Garrett, handguns account for the most gun murders in the U.S.</p> <p>"When I think of Ty, I just think what future he could've had," Ty's uncle, Chase Dodson, told ABC News. "There's no reason in the world ... why a .357 caliber entered his body three times."</p> <p>Handguns were used in 62% of the nation's gun murders, including Ty's, in 2019, FBI data shows. Data from 2020 has not yet been published.</p> <p>According to a 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, handguns were the most common type of gun possessed by federal and state prisoners. About 18% of the prisoners said they possessed a handgun, and 2% or less possessed a rifle or shotgun.</p> <p>And despite public perception, more mass shootings (where four or more victims are killed) are carried out with handguns as opposed to long guns, according to Garrett.</p> <p>Handguns generally fall into two categories: 1. revolvers, which are "wheel guns" that hold about six rounds of ammunition, and 2. semi-automatic type handguns, which have smaller sizes that hold roughly seven to eight rounds, and larger ones with about 15 to 16 rounds, according to Garrett. Handguns are appealing because they're easy to conceal, easy to access around the house and many people, women in particular, tend to feel most comfortable using them, Garrett said.</p> <p>Of the 10,258 gun murders in the U.S. in 2019, handguns were used in 6,368 of them, according to FBI data. But these numbers may not be exact due to a lack of gun violence research, said Daniel Flannery, a professor at Case Western Reserve University and the director of the Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education.</p>

The "sheer availability" of handguns is behind their popularity, Flannery said.

In 2019, 3.6 million handguns were manufactured in the U.S., Flannery said. Only about 150,000 were exported that year, while another 2.5 million handguns were imported, he said, [citing data](#) from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

The 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates said that 90% of the prisoners who had a gun during their crime didn't get it from a retail source.

"It's way easier to get a handgun than it is to do just about anything else in this country," Flannery said. "Our background check is woefully inadequate."

"We really only put any kind of boundaries on federally licensed gun dealers," he said, who are the only ones who "have the capacity to conduct a background check, whether it be at their store or when they are present at a gun show sale."

All other private sales involve sellers who either don't have the ability to conduct a check or don't have "a system that is comprehensive and timely and thorough as a check system," Flannery said.

Although handguns are involved in most shooting deaths, the use of semi-automatic rifles is climbing, said Louis Klarevas, a research professor at Teachers College, Columbia University who specializes in gun violence and safety. In the 1980s, less than 20% of gun massacres (which he counts as six or more victims killed) involved assault weapons, according to a report he issued as an expert witness in a California court case over banning assault weapons.

In the last three years, 67% of gun massacres with six or more deaths were with assault weapons, Klarevas' 2020 report said.

Semi-automatic rifles' bullets are bigger and travel much faster than handguns, Garrett said, and the combination of the speed and size of these bullets is why the risk of death and damage is so much higher.

But handguns are easy to conceal -- and easy to carry, though [open carry laws](#) (seen in many Southern states) and conceal carry laws differ by state.

"If people are carrying them, whether that's because their state has an open carry law, or because they feel they need one for protection, or because they're intending to use it to settle a dispute, more people have them, and more people are using them," Flannery said.

Dodson, Ty's uncle, grew up around guns in rural Kentucky but said his nephew's murder "changed my views." Since Ty's death, Dodson said he won't own or use a gun.

"Can you tell me one good reason to own a gun versus the cons to owning a gun in America? You can't. The numbers are too high. I haven't shot a weapon since 2019, and I probably won't ever again," he said. "I am willing to admit I am strong in my conservative values, but the world has become so dark where I'm not so sure if we have the right to bear arms."

Dodson said he doesn't believe all handguns should be banned. "But I don't think they should be in the hands of the wrong person," he added, saying he supports legal restrictions and gun safety education.

While losing Ty was a turning point for Dodson, it wasn't his first brush with tragedy caused by gun violence.

Dodson said his oldest brother, Chris Dodson, died by suicide on May 5, 2002 -- with a handgun. Dodson said his parents also haven't kept guns in their house since that day.

"I have an amazing life, but I hurt every single day," Dodson said.

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